

THE LONDON MERCURY

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EDITORIAL NOTES

OUR Bibliographical Correspondent deals elsewhere with the biggest "sensation" that has ever occurred in the book-collecting world—not excepting the "sensation" caused by the discovery of the forged early Boccaccio made, in the eighteenth century, by our Consul at Venice, Mr. Joseph Smith. As the market for "modern first editions" has improved, so the discovery of "pre-first-firsts" has advanced. It has almost come to be assumed that an ordinary first edition of a nineteenth-century author was not a first edition at all: that somewhere, in some hole or corner, either he or one of his friends has got printed a little limited edition, prior in date and rather different in text. The habit, it appears, has not been quite so general as we have all supposed. Many of the "first editions," high in the esteem of the market, are not really first editions—but forgeries produced by ingenious and knowledgeable persons to satisfy the demand for rarities. In the book by Messrs. Carter and Pollard, the authenticity of more than fifty "modern firsts" is questioned, and the bogus nature of at least thirty of them is exposed. The authors involved include such persons as Tennyson, Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot, William Morris, R. L. Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling. Of the very rare edition of the latter's *White Horses* (1897) our authors state: "Although this is the first separate edition, undoubtedly executed in 1897, it is nevertheless a piracy specially and successfully designed for the rare book market."

The Flood of Pamphlets

OF others no such words as "undoubtedly executed" could be used; rare pamphlets are in existence which can be demonstrated, by tests of paper and type, to be years younger than the dates on them would suggest. The chief of them is the edition of Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, alleged to have been printed at Reading in 1847, through the mediation of Miss Mitford. This first put Messrs. Carter and Pollard on the track of the forger, or forgers. Cunning forger he was, or cunning

forgers they were. It is very difficult to forge copies of books which exist : even Smith got caught out. But it is easy (provided you do not fail to notice changes in types and the ingredients of paper) to produce editions which never existed at all. Supposing Mr. Ramsay Macdonald were dead, and one cared to get a local printer to do a little book for one which would be described by bibliographers as :

LAYS OF LOSSIEMOUTH

BY

JAMES RAMSAY MACDONALD,
HON. LITT. D. OXFORD

STOW-IN-THE-WOLD

Printed for Private Circulation Only

MDCCCCXXXIV

Who could question the work ? Miss Ishbel could not prove the negative : her father, after all, might have done it. Mr. Baldwin might say : " I was seeing Mr. MacDonald almost every day about that time, and I never heard him mention it." But the thing would stand, unless or until some detective (as it might be Mr. Carter or Mr. Pollard) proved, either through examining correspondence, etc., or through looking at print and paper through a microscope, that such an edition could not have been authorized by the author, and that, in fact, it was faked long after the good honest real first edition, five thousand copies, was issued in London.

Mr. Wise and the Pamphlets

MANY of these false first editions seem to have passed through the hands of Mr. T. J. Wise. Mr. Wise, from whom countless people, including myself, have received countless kindnesses, is, perhaps, the greatest collector of modern books and manuscripts in the world. Go to his house in Hampstead, and you will find first editions of all the great standard books, a very fine collection of seventeenth-century works, and a quite unique collection of books, manuscript works, and letters of the nineteenth century. Ask him for anything and he has it, and can put his finger on it. Pamphlets such as those now examined and denounced are mere fleabites compared with the treasures he possesses. Of one of them it is written : " Mr. Goslin bought fifty-seven copies from Mr. Wise on May 10th, 1912, for about two shillings each "—the high water-mark of this one, at auction, being reached in 1928 when it fetched \$130 at the Anderson Galleries in New York, and £24 at Hodgson's in London. Mr. Wise, as we go to press, has not read the disturbing book ; he has skimmed it, and writes to *The Times Literary Supplement* saying that the late Buxton Forman used to buy remainders in quantities, and that he himself used to take them over, on occasion, from him. Somewhere,

lurking in the background, was a clever forger who took in Buxton Forman, Mr. Wise, and the whole world of book-collectors over a period of forty years.

Modern Collecting

PRESUMABLY he will be run to earth—though nothing will ever stop people vying with him, and endeavouring to avoid his mistakes while not making new ones. Wherever there are what the Americans call “suckers” there will be swindlers: the fate of books must be as the fate of stamps and coins, once mere rarity is the thing which is sought after. The rest of us need not worry very much. We may, being interested in texts and the workings of an author’s mind as reflected in his corrections, like to see first editions and all subsequent editions: we may, if we have a particular affection for an author or an authoress, like to possess the edition on which his or her eyes first rested, or cherish especially some copy bearing an inscription written by hands long since fallen into dust. But the “unknown pirated edition” and the “rare misprint” can interest lovers of literature no more than they would have interested the poets—who did not live, love, suffer, and die in order that their misprints should be collected, that their first suppressed imperfections should be rediscovered, or that frenzied speculators in a Book-Pit should gamble on the “futures” of little brochures that they produced for their friends. They would all have laughed, heartily or cynically according to their wont, had they known that their schoolboy collaborations with their sisters, or their fortuitous publications with booksellers in Munich or Copenhagen, would be as earnestly sought after as the almost unique issues of certain British Guiana and Mauritius stamps. They would also have laughed at the notion that the stamps would have been competed for, without any reference to their beauty or their associations.

And the Sequel

HOWEVER, fine detective work must be admired. The book by Messrs. Carter and Pollard is a masterpiece in its way, and to read is as fascinating as any novel of detection. They go no farther than the facts warrant: they finish with an interrogation: will anybody still alive who can throw light on these mysteries throw it? It is a pity that Messrs. Clay do not possess their books before 1911: it is a pity also that these exposures were not made when more of the parties directly or indirectly implicated were alive. The mystery may never be cleared up, and suspicion may fasten on people who do not deserve it—people “taken in.” Collectors, however, must face their risks: and it is no bad thing that something should happen to emphasize the difference between the letter and the spirit.

J. C. SQUIRE

NOTES AND NEWS

THE announcement for the 1934 Season, which is the fortieth, of the Promenade Concerts in the Queen's Hall, has been received. "Each week-night at 20.00 for eight weeks from Saturday, 11 August, to Saturday, 6 October."

At that hour, which those good at mathematics tell us is 8 p.m., Sir Henry Wood will conduct the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra in a series of programmes of their usual high standard. Any attempt to please all of the people all of the time must fail, but the wisdom with which these programmes have been selected year after year speaks well for a worthy attempt to reach that lofty pinnacle. Tickets may be obtained from the B.B.C., Broadcasting House, from Queen's Hall, and the usual agents. The doors open at "19.30," for the programmes at "20.00."

THE third Exhibition of Cotswold Art and Craftsmanship opened in the Alcuin Press Gallery, Chipping Campden, Glos., on July 31st, and will remain open until September 1st. Sir William Rothenstein has written a preface for the catalogue of this exhibition of Furniture, Joinery, Textiles, Pottery, Wrought Iron, Silversmithing, Models of Farm Waggon, Printing, Heraldry, Stained Glass, Jewellery, Needlework and Embroidery, Oil and Tempera Paintings, Water-colours, Drawings, Etchings, Woodcuts, Sculpture, Masks, and the work of William Morris. This is an exhibition of unusual interest, in surroundings well worth the journey. Mr. F. L. Griggs, R.A., R.E., Hon.R.I.B.A., is President of the Committee. Mr. A. B. R. Fairclough is the Secretary.

THE Royal Institute of British Architects call our attention to the fact that their new building in Portland Place, now nearing completion, is in an almost ideally central location for the purpose: "The site is, in fact, almost ideal for its purpose." Directions for reaching the building, which space does not permit us to give in detail, may be obtained from the Secretary, R.I.B.A., 9, Conduit Street, London, W.1.

The Faculty of Architecture of the British School at Rome have awarded the Rome Scholarship in Architecture for 1934 to Mr. Fred Allard Charles Maunders (aged 25), of Armstrong College School of Architecture (University of Durham), Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

A COMMITTEE with an imposing and suitable list of names have been formed in order to collect means for the erection of a monument to Anna Pavlova, in Regents Park, London. The monument is to be erected by the Swedish sculptor, Professor Carl Milles. The Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Charles Hambro, will receive contributions under the address: Hambro's Bank, Limited, 67, Pall Mall, S.W.1; or they may be sent to the members of the sub-committee: His Excellency the Swedish Minister, Baron Palmstierna, Mr. V. Dandré and Miss Nadine Hall.

ON page 324 of this number we have a woodcut by Mr. E. R. Payne. On page 329 there is one by Mr. G. R. Payne. This is not a misprint. The men are brothers.



Illustration for *Tapestry Song*, (P. 294)

Woodcut by GWEN RAVERAT

POETRY

Tapestry Song

O HERE is Paradise for me
 With white does bounding,
 , And here the fair, immortal tree
 With various fruits abounding.

Hesperidean apples gold,
 And apples red as wine,
 And gourds that show like moons below,
 And silver pears that shine.

O sweeter, sweeter every one
 Than mead the Gods have drunk,
 And all are for the shepherd's son
 Who leans against the trunk.

And there he'll stay, the timeless day,
 Where no harsh wind can find him,
 His crook among the strawberry leaves
 And dark, dark woods behind him.

There roam the strange and savage beasts,
 No peace their fear will grant them
 Until he play his roundelay
 And music shall enchant them.

See where the tiger to destroy
 Doth roam with ebon stripes.
 O shepherd, O Arcadian boy
 Play, play your pipes.

"How sweet the Shepherd his pipes doth blow,
 Sing Ut Hoy, Tirlee Tirlow,
 How silverly, silverly, silverly play,
 Like drops of dew at break of day.

Like drops of dew where cowslips are,
Tirlow, Tirlee and echoing far,
(Drops of dew where periwinkles blow)
Ut Hoy, Tirlee Tirlow.

Tirlow Tirlee and echoing high
(Larks are lost in the blue of the sky)
Echoing all the valleys through,
(Periwinkles, periwinkles, periwinkles blue).

Ut Hoy and silvery gay
(Fear, Fear is fled away ;
The sun on the river, the lark in the morn ;
Joy, Joy, Joy is born).

Tirlow, Tirlee and Ut Hoy
(Born, born, born is Joy)
Sing Ut Hoy, Tirlee Tirlow,
So sweet the Shepherd his pipes doth blow."

Now in the dark arcaded wood
Every creature still is stood,
Each one pricks a happy ear,
Tirlee Tirlow, this sound to hear.

Out of the branchèd wood come they,
To hear the shepherd's roundelay ;
Out of the wood on dancing feet,
All to obey his music sweet.

Here the gentled Tiger goes
By the delicate dancing Does ;
Here the Stag with golden horns,
And the prancing Unicorns.

Spotted Pard with agate stare
Frights no more the Fawn so fair ;
Capering Kids spring high in air
Round the blunder-footed Bear.

Conies gambol out of the rocks,
Leveret with tawny Fox ;
Leaping Lambs desert their folds,
Frogs dance out of the marigolds.

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Here appear in lumbering bounds
 Great King Theseus' dewlapped Hounds ;
 Here his white escapèd Steed
 Comes curvetting over the mead.

Here with jewelled tails aglow
 Peacocks gloriously go ;
 Here the swinging Monkey gets
 Purple grapes for castanets.

Here the Lion, King of Beasts,
 On the golden apples feasts ;
 Whilst my Lady's Bratchet rare
 Rollicks with a silver pear.

Caterpillars striped and green
 Measuring up the twigs are seen ;
 Asp with spotted Adder weaves
 Harmless in and out the leaves.

Dove and Hawk with folded wing
 On the fruited branches swing ;
 Hovering, dipping, dancing rise
 Honey-bees and Butterflies.

All Creation carols free
 Round the fair immortal tree :—
 Fear, Fear is fled away,
 Joy is born, is born to-day.

Tirlee Tirlow, about they go
 Entwining as a river :—
 Sing Ut Hoy, Shepherd Boy,
 Play your pipes for ever.

FRANCES CORNFORD



Woodcut by GWEN RAVERAT

TWO POEMS

After Visiting Palmyra

IN these Damascus gardens grow
Fruit like flame and flowers like snow.
Down emerald paths cool waters flow.

Small singing birds on fig-trees sit,
While Arabs in cool garments fit
Eat apricot and pomegranate.

And here a shepherd lies asleep—
He has so small a flock to keep.
Beside him slumber his two sheep.

In these Damascus gardens song
Swells to the lips' edge deep and long,
And the heart laughs out loud and strong.

Forget Palmyra's brazen spell—
The ghosts, the dreams we dare not tell
Of how that haunted city fell.

Sing and forget! Pluck fruit, and soon
Like honey from a golden spoon
The sun's bright honey-drops of noon

Through leaf and flower will fall to rest
On bird and shepherd, cheek and breast
And lull to sleep the singer's zest.

To sleep . . . Farewell! Tread water deep
Atlantis bound alone. The sheep,
A fleece of gold . . . to sleep, to sleep.

The City of Three Faiths

I

THE CITY

RELIGION'S soul in one word's song !—
 (One word, one word, but trumpet-strong !)—
 Its birthday hymn, its requiem :
 Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

II

THE FAITHS

Jews by the Wailing Wall.

These in their bitter anguish burn
 For glory that may not return.
 (And does the flame more fiercely glow
 Because they know, because they know ?)
 Poet and prophet dreamed and died.
 Anguish and bitterness abide.
 If faith breeds death, if hope's a sin,
 What is there left of worth to win ?
 What is there left but faith and hope
 As candle-light for these who grope
 Up crooked lanes to some lost hill
 Ten thousand years before them still.
 This poet sang their nation's youth :
 This prophet soared in dreams to truth :
 And blazed their poet-prophet-kings
 Who sang of God as sunshine sings.
 And if in darkness now they burn
 For glory that may not return—
 Dear God, shower mercy on this race
 Who first of nations saw Thy face
 Single and clear, and since that sight
 Go seeking Thee by candle-light.

A Christian in Gethsemane.

Beneath the wall grow olive trees
 Too old for any wind to tease ;
 And flowers the calm Franciscans raise
 Have lit with flame this quiet place.

And Christians come from far to see
 The garden of Gethsemane.
 Here there is peace, as though huge pain
 Had died in conflict in the brain,
 And left its conqueror's soul asleep,
 Lonely and sad, dream-buried-deep :
 Soul's bourn after dread pilgrimage—
 How far from this the sects, the rage ;
 The Cross, the cries, the clashing blades ;
 The Christ forgot by the Crusades :
 Torture and carnage : their dear Lord
 Re-crucified upon a sword !

The Ghost of Moslem Glory.

Of faith a gale, of truth a spark—
 Like crackling flame across the dark
 Blood-hot they sprang, blood-hot they sped
 To cleanse the earth of doubt by dread.
 In God, for God, by God protected :
 In faith, by faith alone directed :
 For God and Truth they drained the lees—
 What need of Hope for such as these ?

Religion's Home, the Dome of the Rock.

Ere Herod built, ere Pompey flaunted
 His Roman Pride, the rock was haunted.
 Holiest of holies, ere there came
 The tragic Jew with hymn and flame.
 Down steep unnumbered centuries stand
 Successive temples built by hand
 Above, beside, astride that rock
 Shaped like God's execution-block.

My heart, be still ! The channels run
 To draw that liquid to the sun—
 What centuries' suns have lapped the flood
 Of terror's sweat, of human blood ?
 Here forty thousand Moslems died
 To expiate Christ crucified
 A thousand years ere birth, their doom,
 Had touched their eyes with beauty's bloom—
 Those eyes that scanned the fierce Crusade
 Unflinching, faithful and afraid.

Religion's citadel ! the foe
 How often came, how long ago ?
 The gates are down, we cannot win,
 The foe is in—shall fear step in ?
 Stand, brother, stand by me and die ;
 And if the sword-men pass us by,
 Be patient, they will soon look back
 For some fresh target to attack.

O bursting heart and faltering eye,
 Make haste to die, make haste to die !

Christian, Mahomedan and Jew,
 Have you not shared in what these knew ?
 Have you not each known thousands fall
 In faith that death could not appal ?
 Have you not each bred faith and hope
 As candle-light for us who grope
 Seeking a temple on a hill
 Ten thousand years before us still ?

ALAN AYLING

After Years

I HAVE almost forgotten
 That still your feet
 Case themselves in silk and leather,
 And leave print, in rainy weather,
 On some far street.

Or that your chiselled nostrils
 Draw life from air,
 Or that these same mornings you wake,
 Or raise curved hands to shake
 The same soft hair.

Thought falters in telling me
 That you may talk
 Somewhere, and people listen casually,
 And touch your hand, and see no prodigy
 When you walk.

As to my occasional letters—
 They might be flowers, tossed
 At night into a long wind, and whirled
 Into an ancient dark beyond the world
 Where something was lost.

H. BONER

THREE POEMS

I

Stars Sliding

THE stars are sliding wanton through trees,
 The sky is sliding steady over all.
 Great Bear to Gemini will lose his place
 And Cygnus over world's brink slip and fall.

Follow-my-Leader's not so bad a game.
 But were it Leap Frog : O to see the shoots
 And tracks of glory ; Scorpions and Swans tame.
 And Argo swarmed with Bulls and other brutes.

II

Drachms and Scruples

MISERY weighed by drachms and scruples
 Is but scrawls on a vain page.
 To cruel masters we are pupils,
 Escape comes careless with old age.

O why were stars so set in Heaven
 To desire greedily as gluttons do ;
 Or childish trinkets—may Death make even
 So rough an evil as we go through.

III

Possessions

SAND have the ants, clay ferny young weeds for play
 But what shall please the wind now the trees are away
 War took on Whitcombe steep ?
 It breathes there, and wonders at old roarings
 October time at all lights, and the new clearings
 For memory are like to weep.

IVOR GUERNEY

“SHELVED”

By B. BARSEGHIAN

WE were four, every morning in the “No Smoking” compartment at the head of the train—myself, unmarried and 40, though I look 50, two other forgotten old maids and a widow. The widow and I were the first to scrape up an acquaintance. For months we had taken the same train to work, but without occasion to speak. Then one day the widow pointed to a little stream flowing from my bag. Its source was a couple of eggs destined for my lunch which I had cracked in my haste and which now spread a thick yellow smear on my coat.

Mopping up the damage with my big handkerchief, I thanked my neighbour, and felt that I owed her an explanation for those eggs. Poverty always carries a sense of guilt. . . .

“Living is so high, restaurants are out of the question ; a meal at one means a four-day fast afterwards. I have a niece to support. There’s no end to the expenses : tuition, books, notebooks and all the rest. . . .”

“I take my lunch, too,” the woman replied, showing me a little parcel which she held. “Just a little cold meat and bread. I am a widow and I have a boy to raise. You know what that means ?”

(Did I know !)

After that first day we talked like old friends. Probably our silent journeys had brought us together without our knowing it. Since then, every day, we greeted each other on the platform smiling ; we got in together into the “No Smoking” compartment, and, seated face to face, we never stopped talking.

I recounted innumerable little happenings about my niece, how, through inattention, she was only second in history ; how her worthless mother spent every penny she had on clothes without giving a thought to her daughter ; I talked of my neighbours, of all things that made up my daily life. From time to time I heard what the widow was saying. She was talking at the same time as I. The details of her life all circled about her son, I knew that he coughed, that he was weak in mathematics and that he let his things be stolen at school.

The widow was quite evidently a foreigner. She spoke French with a queer accent, but her words were so simple and warm that they went straight to my heart, more than if she had been related to me. She had a sad look about her, even when she smiled. I gathered from what she said that her husband had been assassinated by some fanatics. I had no idea why.

One day, two other spinsters, who, like us, always got into the carriage at the head of the train, but at the next station, joined in our conversation.

The widow was telling me that her boy was ill, and that, having been obliged to leave him at home alone, she was worried.

“Oh, that *is* hard,” one of them put in warmly. “Yes, that really is hard. Just think, every day I have to go away and leave my three darling cats alone in the house. It is awful. To-day I’m specially anxious; Minet did not touch the mince I put down for him this morning; he didn’t even drink his milk.”

We stared at her, stupefied.

“Yes—every morning I give them milk and chopped meat. I leave them some lights to eat during the day, and I bring them liver or fish when I come home at night. I never give them the same thing twice in succession—never—that’s very unhealthy! . . .”

The poor creature was badly dressed, and as she spoke her hands gripped a greasy packet—her noon lunch, no doubt.

I looked at the tiny parcel, spotted with grease, and did some mental arithmetic about what it must cost her to feed her “three darling cats,” then I made a little sign to the widow which meant, “Here is another of the Forgotten. Loneliness, and no one to love. . . .”

She went on:

“Evenings, when I come home from work, tired out, and depressed with the day’s trials—I have a very hard job in town—my three little cats, the minute they hear the door, rush towards me. One jumps on my shoulder. The others mew and rub my skirt, I don’t even have time to take off my hat, I sit down and there they all are on my lap. They rub against me. They’re fond of me, you know. And they’re terribly jealous of each other. I daren’t stroke one more than another. I simply daren’t.”

We were very soon friends with them. After that, every morning, as the train drew into the next station, the widow and I put our heads out of the window and signalled to them to get into our compartment. They, proud to have someone expecting them, hurried towards us.

“And the cat?” we would ask—almost sincerely. One or the other of her cats was always in trouble; a fish-bone had stuck in its throat or something else. Several times the veterinary had to be called in.

Our interest made her happy.

“You mustn’t worry,” she would say, trying to reassure us. “He is much better. The veterinary gave him a prescription which has done him no end of good. It costs 17 francs, not counting the fee for the visit.”

She clung to her greasy little parcel with her thin fingers.

Little by little we came to know all the details of each others’ lives without knowing each other personally—without even exchanging names. For that reason, probably, we told each other the truth.

What did it matter from what countries we came? Or that my name was Rose or theirs Marie or Lucy? We were all alike lonely, all alike poor. Solitude held the same terrors for all of us; we all had the same cares.

On these daily journeys we came to open even the most intimate corners

of our hearts. We talked of our great sorrows as well as our small ones, our joys, our hopes, without fear of provoking jealousy, contempt or ridicule. We were not sufficiently associated to wish each other ill or to rejoice over our reciprocal misfortunes. It is only those near each other who rejoice in doing one another harm—those who know the exact place of the wound and the sure way to draw blood.

We did not lie for the simple reason that we were under no obligation to tell the truth. One only lies, as a rule, to someone to whom one owes the truth.

One of the four rarely spoke. She had neither child nor niece nor cats. She looked up to us with a sort of respect.

One day she got in with her eyes shining, and in spite of her efforts to appear downcast we saw at once that she had a new air of importance. It was clear that she thought better of herself.

The doctor, after examining her, had declared that she had liver trouble. From that day she became as talkative as the rest of us. And with what pride did she talk of her liver. It was "My liver this" and "My liver that" . . . A stranger hearing her would have thought she was speaking of a person—someone who was dear to her.

"My liver likes milk. It is strange, for although the doctor says red meat is bad for the liver, mine, as if it knew how fond I am of meat, behaves perfectly well when I eat a beefsteak. You won't believe me when I tell you that my liver even allows me to drink wine—yes, even red wine. Isn't it wonderful?" In short, it was the best little liver in the world.

And she was saved. She was no longer alone. She had her liver to take care of, to look after. Her liver was the companion of her solitude.

Sometimes one of us would arrive in an ill humour. It usually happened towards the end of the week, when we were worn out and gnawed at by life. At such a time a mere nothing was enough to put our nerves on edge. It was enough for a passenger to seat herself at a little distance from her corner for the one who was fed up to snap :

"Hello, do you think you are in a drawing-room, able to sit like that? Or perhaps you have rented the compartment? Look how the rest of us are squeezed in! (As we were opposite her, her position could not incommoded us.) Look at that now! Did you ever see such cheek?"

Sometimes, the traveller whom we criticized, being shy, would squeeze herself into her corner, blushing. That did not satisfy either the one who wanted to quarrel or the rest of us who looked on.

Sometimes the stranger, as full of bile as the rest of us, would open her mouth without any intention of closing it again. She would describe us as "sour old maids, shrivelled drivellers and unloved lemons."

The quarrel would last all the way to Paris, stirring us up, making us red in the face, exciting our blood. If the traveller spoke at some length the one with the liver-complaint would say to her impressively :

"If you had on the end of your tongue what I have on my liver, it wouldn't be able to wag like that—or any other way."

Sometimes our wickedness rose to such heights that it astonished even ourselves and filled us with a strange sort of despair.

I remember one bitter morning of black fog, the chill seemed to have congealed the marrow of our bones into barbs of spitefulness. We were worn out before the day began. That morning we behaved like fiends incarnate to a woman who got in with a large bundle done up in black. She was puffing for breath and dripping with sweat in spite of the cold. She was quite evidently, like the rest of us, cast aside on life's shelf. Of a frightening thinness, she seemed to have melted around her black bundle.

She did not even reply to our offensive. Only a little shrug of her emaciated shoulders showed that she had even heard us. Her poise exasperated us. We were hunting for still more outrageous insults to make the woman talk when we heard the voice of the cat-owner, trembling as if with a fever :

“I should think that with the cost of living as high as it is you could find better use for all that wasted meat on your nose !”

That was going too far ! We held our tongues, petrified. A heavy silence descended on us till the end of the journey. When the train pulled in, we all, of one accord, reached out a hand toward the stranger's big black bundle and helped her down with it. We even carried it right up to the top of the platform. As we separated we noticed that the stranger's eyes were red and damp like our own. We shall probably never see her again. It does not matter. She understood us.

* * * * *

One day the two old girls at the next station had a stranger with them whom they introduced to us.

“She's a dressmaker,” they explained. “She used to work at home, but she's just got a job at one of the big shops. She will be taking our train every day. She lives in the same house as we do.”

This woman, although of our same age, could not be considered one of us. With her smart clothes and her tremendous efforts to appear young she had attained a sort of agelessness. Whereas we, who had the wisdom and grace to know how to grow old, looked askance at her rouged cheeks, her eyelashes pointed like quills and her flabby throat which she tried in vain to conceal with a broad ribbon.

Not many women know how to grow old. It is no small accomplishment. It is tragic, or more often simply ridiculous, to see a woman who has lost her power of attraction but who hangs on to the tricks. Our hats, dark in colour and already historical, our long skirts and our collars coming up to our ears, clearly showed that we knew how to grow old. This knowledge was so profoundly a part of us that we were not even proud of it. Often we would confess, laughing, that for owners of faces like ours chastity was no virtue. We were ugly.

My face was graced with a nose of prodigious proportions ; farther down, built on equally generous lines, was a mouth which cut my face in two pieces. Among its other characteristics, my nose lacked all power of

defence against the cold and became ever more red and respectable as the temperature went down. If the artist who modelled me had only been as generous with the rest of me as he was with my nose and my mouth, I would not have been so short. My eyes looked smaller than they really were on account of their neighbours.

Thus had I for forty years, with a patience that bordered on courage, paraded my ridiculous person along life's road.

The owner of the three cats was my opposite. She had almost no nose at all, and you could only see her mouth when she talked, so parsimoniously had it been chiselled. Her eyes, which stuck out, were enormous, one feared that at any moment they might fall on the floor and go "pop."

After we became intimate we used to joke with each other, saying that if our two uglinesses could have been rolled into one and then divided up evenly we might both have had tolerable faces.

The one with liver trouble had regular features, but she was so terribly pale, and her bones stuck out so, that it made you shudder to look at her. She must have been pretty when she was young, and we suspected that a romance might lie buried beneath her deathly green colour.

But the foreigner was different. Her features were regular, and so seductive that even her pallor could not rob them of their attraction. She was beautiful, and for that reason we felt a sort of respect for her virtue.

The men who got into our compartment used to notice her at once and keep their eyes on her, doing everything they could to make her notice them. Even after we drew in they would wait until the widow stepped down, but she never even noticed their manoeuvres. She did not, like so many women, make a boast of her virtue. Neither, by her mannerisms, did she imply, "Oh, these men! They never let you alone. But look how proper I am!" She did not seem even to notice that she was different from us.

Often married couples would get into our carriage. We could always distinguish these at once from the more temporary liaisons by the indescribable boredom on their faces. The men helped their wives in with the look of a man condemned to penal servitude for life. Then they whipped a newspaper from a pocket and held it up like a screen between themselves and their wives, while having a good look at the other women over the top of it. The women leaned an elbow against their husbands' arms, and to entertain them, discussed their housekeeping worries—how much they had to pay for fish, what they had or intended to cook for supper, or even how many pairs of stockings they had darned. The husband answered "yes" or "no" without altering his bored expression.

Often it was the wife who tried her best to get a seat a long way off from her husband, but he, with the air of an owner, put his paw on her shoulder and made her sit where he wished, her eyes dancing with anger.

The couples bound in holy wedlock always made us laugh.

Short-time alliances, on the other hand, used to disgust us by their exaggerated love-making. We would turn our backs, but that did not prevent our hearing the primitive noise of their interminable kisses. The

one with the liver complaint particularly expressed her disgust by her boisterous gestures. Pointing to the woman bent back beneath the weight of the kisses, she would say :

“Those kisses are overdone. That girl will soon be travelling alone.”

During their embraces, which seemed never to end, we would edge away from the lovers, shaking our skirts out as if there were something sticky clinging to them.

That was why, on the first day she was introduced to us, we took in the made-up dressmaker from top to toe and at one glance decided that she was not our sort.

In spite of our haughty air toward her, we listened eagerly to her conversation, more out of curiosity, I think, than pleasure.

She was for ever talking of her “friend”—proudly. The moment she commenced “my friend this” and “my friend that” we used to put on a detached look and pretend not to be listening. We would cough, look out of the window—taking good care, however, not to miss a word of what she said.

Our Monday morning meetings were the best. We had more to talk about and our faces looked almost human. The Sunday’s rest had had its visible effect. Our packets of lunch were larger and we were brighter, gayer. We talked unceasingly, and even after we had reached town and were on the point of taking our leave we went on talking. Often we all spoke at once—so fearful were we of not being able to finish all we had to say.

For a moment we lost that look of dumb creatures about to be harnessed. Each of us saw her reflection in the others. We all, without realizing it, helped one another to bear up under life’s burden—an unconscious aid that was all the more precious in that it called for no gratitude.

Gratitude is too great a load for man’s shoulder. That is why we can often pardon those who do us wrong, but we can never forgive those who do us good. Human beings are made like that. Not only do we not pardon the good done us, but we even do ill to our benefactors the first moment we can.

The ancients used to say of those who did them an evil turn, “But I have never done good to him. Why should he do me ill?”

Our chatter did not prevent our working. Our hands moved as fast as our tongues. We sewed, we knitted or embroidered to make a little more money.

Monday mornings, often in chorus, we would say, “Did you have a good Sunday?”

“So-so,” the cat-owner would answer. “Saturday evening, I did all the dishes and polished the floor. There’s no time during the week, you know. Then Sunday I did the washing. I worked hard. And I made fresh beds for the cats, poor darlings. Sunday is such a happy day for them, they run and jump all over the place. Just try leaving a ball of yarn on the floor. You’d never recognize it after. Oh, and I forgot. I did the marketing. Fish was quite cheap, so I got enough for both me and the cats. And in the afternoon I did the mending.”

Our programmes, with slight variations, were all alike : laundry work, dish-washing and darning. Sometimes a cake baked as a reward.

"I," began Miss Painted Face when we had done, accentuating each word, "I went to town on Saturday evening, with my friend. What a lovely evening ! First we had dinner. I don't know if you know that restaurant on the corner of the boulevards, famous for its shell-fish ? Well, my friend just adores it."

Silence.

It wasn't much. We were eager for more. But how get it ? When she spoke we pretended not to be listening. I stooped over to rub some imaginary mud off my shoes. The widow looked out at the villas as if she was seeking a familiar face, and the two others coughed the whole time. How could we ask questions ? How learn the end of the story ?

Finally curiosity overcame pride, and I mumbled as if I were speaking to myself :

"Oh yes, shell-fish. I don't say they aren't appetizing—but hard to digest. If one goes home immediately and then to bed there isn't time to digest them."

"Go home immediately ? Nothing like that ! After dinner we went to the pictures—a lovely play. All about love, very moving. And other attractions—each one better than the last. Tableaux to dream about. My friend loved it—he loved it so much that . . ." she giggled.

This time we had courage enough to turn our questioning faces towards her :

"Do you know why I'm laughing ? I just remembered all the liberties my friend took in the dark. I can't help laughing. If you knew how naughty he is !"

Another silence.

It was someone else's turn to make her talk. The owner of the three cats realized her duty, and, turning to us, as if *we* were the ones who had been to the cinema, she said :

"As a matter of fact, the pictures don't last very long. One can be at home by eleven and get one's rest."

"Rest ! Don't ever think it !" replied Painted Face, with exaggerated astonishment. "When you go to town with your young man it isn't because you want rest. You sound as if you'd just been born yesterday, it is uncanny."

Four pairs of wide-open eyes fixed on the Painted Face and waited for what followed.

"Yes, my dear girls, you're all as pure as new-born lambs. After the cinema we went to a café for a drop to drink. I took a liqueur and my friend ordered a bottle of white wine. Then afterwards . . ."

"Afterwards you went home ?" we all asked at once.

We had no more strength to pretend either to indifference or to disdain. We wanted to know.

"Home ! Heavens no ! But you *are* curious ! I don't want to be respons-

ible for the loss of your innocent souls. *I don't want to shut the pearly gates in your faces.*”

She laughed. Then, seeing our downcast expressions, she added, very slowly, “When we finally left the café the last train had gone. So we went to an hotel. And by five o'clock in the morning we had not closed an eye. I should say not!”

This time the silence lasted longer. None of us thought of asking a question. Our dreamy stares wandered far over the landscape we were passing.

I remembered my Saturday night, I saw my big bed, where, doubled up on myself, I had not succeeded in getting warm in spite of the hot-water bottle at my feet. I remembered the monotonous tick-tack of my clock, which reproaches me “Always alone, always alone! . . .”

I looked at the widow. She was paler than ever. Her regrets run deeper, her deprivation is more keenly felt. She who has tasted joy senses solitude the more acutely. She has her memories, a nostalgia which eats out her heart. She shut her eyes. She did not want to revive those memories which she kept buried at the bottom of her heart like sacred relics, in response to the voice of this painted-faced trollop, but in spite of herself, her past passed and repassed before her closed eyes, where tears shone. . . .

The four of us looked admiringly at her lovely trembling lips, her long eyelashes which had hidden so many tears. We understood the nobility of that inner struggle, and her detachment from all the pleasures which could have been hers for the taking, had she wished. We understood her wanting to remain faithful to a beautiful memory.

When we saw that she was drowning herself in her memories, we said the one word which we knew had the power to bring her back to reality. “And your son, did he get through the term satisfactorily? Is he well?”

Her son! That word was as potent as a miracle.

Her son, her son—her everything. He was her past with all its memories, her strength to endure the present and her courage to face the future.

The widow, making an effort, turned her back on the past and smiled at us across the picture we had evoked of her boy.

Thus, each of us, after having been distracted from our daily cares by the amorous adventures of Painted Face, would return to our usual places on life's side-lines.

* * * * *

Painted Face had another subject which pleased us as much as her love affairs. She spoke with an enthusiasm which touched on ecstasy of the “great day” which was to come so that rich and poor would enjoy life's benefits equally.

Her young man worked at the office of a Communist paper, and much of what he got there by rote he would repeat to his friend. Therefore, thanks to Painted Face, we now knew that we were “the proletariat,” and that the rich were the “filthy bourgeois,” who exploited us; that it was not

right that we should go on working half-starved and half-satisfied, and pass our lives in misery when there were people who, without so much as lifting a finger, had so much money that they could not spend it all on food or clothes or even on amusing themselves.

"Yes," said Painted Face, stammering with emotion, "Yes, we are idiots to bow our necks; we ought to cry out, to revolt. Then, at least, they would understand that we don't intend to swallow their unjust laws. We must face them squarely; the more we bow our necks, the more they heap on our backs. . . . We're human, aren't we?" she asked, turning to the one with the bad liver. "You—why do you go on working, in your condition? If you had the money for it you'd go and take a cure and not go around, looking the corpse you do. You'd be good-looking, if you had your health and decent clothes. Then what wouldn't the men do to make you notice them? And you," turning to the owner of the three cats, "why do you leave your cats home alone while you go out to work, why do you have to half-starve yourself to feed them? You could stay home and every day of your life would be a Sunday. And as for you, Miss" (it was to me she was speaking), "perhaps you think yourself too ugly to taste of love? But it isn't so. There are plenty uglier than you, who find the most expensive frocks not good enough for them. They make faces and say in a syrupy voice, 'it's not right,' or 'it isn't fine enough for me!' And when they have to stand two minutes for a fitting they turn and mince over to the gentleman who is with them—because there is always a gentleman—to murmur in a plaintive little voice, 'Oh, but I am tired!' If you knew how it makes me boil with rage! In spite of the smile I keep on my lips I say to myself, 'So you are tired after standing two minutes, and what about me? Do you think I'm not tired after having sewn that whole dress? I can wear out my eyes for a piece of dry bread.' Believe me, there's no pity in my eye when I watch those women going off with their gentlemen to drive off in the grand cars which are waiting for them outside the shop to some tea or other. They'll soon forget their fatigue, nibbling the little cakes and listening to the music. But as for me, with my mouth bitter with anger and weariness, which has to be shaped up again with a new smile for a new customer, quite as stupid as the one who has just left. No, this injustice can't go on for ever. The Great Day won't be long coming."

The "Great Day." We listened to her, attracted, but incredulous. The "Great Day"—we imagined it as mighty as a storm, a hurricane or an earthquake. It was to us a sort of legend like those palaces at the bottom of the sea, indescribably magnificent, inhabited by dream-people. We saw it like those enchanted forests where the trees are made of gold, the flowers of diamonds, and the fountains and streams of pearls. There are such wonderful things in legends!

We couldn't imagine ourselves rich. When the "Great Day" came would we know how to be rich, we asked ourselves anxiously. What would it be like to have our sleep out, to eat our fill? Could our time ever possibly be our own—all our own?

"Who is going to feed us if we don't work?" one of us asked, leaving us stranded at the gates of reality.

Painted Face had no answer. She stuttered, got muddled up, and took refuge behind the enchanted words "the Great Day," and in repeating her words backwards and forwards, but she couldn't get us worked up. We grasped our greasy little packets more firmly in our tired hands, sure that they were our only tangible assets, happy in the knowledge that the needs of our stomachs were assured for that day at least.

* * * * *

The "Great Day" came, but only for Painted Face, a very sad one.

One morning the owner of the three cats and her friend got into the compartment with a very mysterious air. What they had to tell us was so important it made their voices hoarse.

It was about Painted Face. They had heard angry voices in her room, then a door being banged to, and after that, sobbing.

"He's probably left her," they said, "for ever." We already knew that the young man had used up all her savings on women of light character.

At first we could find nothing to say. We did not know whether we were pleased or sorry for poor Painted Face. I think it was a little of both. The one with the bad liver expressed our thought:

"She's paying up for her fun," she said. "One always does; I know something about that." "Yes, she would pay for her nights with her lover, her hours of forgetfulness, her moments intoxicated with joy. Didn't we have to pay for our cakes on Sunday, our little pleasures? One has to pay for everything, even for those sweet dreams of a 'Great Day.' . . ."

We talked very little that day. Each of us was sunk in her own thoughts. From the age of 13, that is to say for 27 years, I had gone up and down on this line, always with a greasy parcel in my hand. I had re-lived *the same day* for 27 years, and without a doubt I would go on re-living it for several years more, until, incapacitated for work, life threw me on to a still higher shelf—a useless old thing.

Which was better? What Painted Face had done—played, laughed, loved and been beloved, and afterwards wept, or my life in which there had been few tears but continual sorrow.

After a four days' absence, Painted Face came back into our compartment. We saw at once that she was keeping herself under control so as not to show her sorrow. Nevertheless, she was not so well groomed. The rouge on her lips exceeded its boundaries, and one cheek appeared much healthier than the other.

She began talking of the weather. Then, opening her handbag, she drew out her little mirror and her box of paints, and corrected the defects of her make-up.

Our silence quite evidently annoyed her. Her movements were jerky and her voice harsh. But our silence was not intentional. We simply did

not know what to say to her. To pretend that we did not know was beyond us, so we kept still.

She, looking at herself in her mirror, said in that quarrelsome voice of the bad days :

“ When one has a young man one needs to look well ; one has to keep oneself up. . . . In your case, I would probably look just as down at heel, but luckily I . . . ”

She played the part of being beloved. That put out in us the spark of compassion which we felt for her. The one with the liver, who was always ready to burst, opened her mouth. We saw by her eye that she would be pitiless. All together we prevented her speaking.

“ No, hold your tongue, it's not worth while, you'd better . . . ”

At that Painted Face exploded :

“ So, you think that I haven't noticed the looks you've been exchanging ? Very well, since you know that he has gone, understand also that he's coming back. I tell you, he's coming back ! He can't live without me, do you know that ? He can't ! Yes, the day before yesterday he went by my house ; his feelings did not allow him even to look up at my windows. I understand him well enough to know that it was emotion which prevented him.”

After that she never stopped talking of her friend. Every circumstance, no matter how insignificant, served as an argument to prove that he still loved her. If he did not pass her house, it was his feeling for her which kept him away. If someone told her that the young man had looked sad on a certain day, it was for her. If, on the other hand, he had been gay, it was to hide his sorrow.

“ I write him every day,” she said, “ sometimes twice a day, and my letters are not returned. That's a good sign. Every now and then I send him a wire. Oh, just a tiny little wire. For example, I say ‘ Good night, big darling ’ or perhaps ‘ a little kiss. ’ I don't want him to feel that he's forgotten, he must not be afraid to come back. . . . ”

* * * * *

One Monday morning Painted Face burst into the train like a bomb, and we saw at once that she had forgotten her rouge.

No smile. No greeting.

“ The pirate ! ” she cried out in a harsh voice, “ Pirate, brigand ! He's mad about another woman ; he has even taken her to his house. He never even invited me to live with him ! And what sort of person do you think she is ? A quite young girl, ordinary as anything, and without a penny. She is young, I don't deny it, I have seen her. But so ordinary and dressed in the worst possible taste. I said to my friend, ‘ How can anyone of your distinction allow yourself to be seen out with such a little goose as that ? ’ I repeated it : ‘ How can you ? ’ He didn't even answer. . . . ”

Painted Face went on after a moment's silence :

“ I gave him all I had saved. I even went into debt. He asks so nicely !

And there you are ! Now that he has it, he leaves me. But I would have forgiven him everything if he had come back—if he had only come back ! ”

She followed the young man and his mistress like a shadow. She waited outside the restaurants and the hotels they frequented. She took the same trains ; she went to the same cafés and sat looking at the young man sadly, hoping always to lure him back.

The one with the liver advised her :

“ Your method is all wrong. Don’t follow him. Men have no use for women who run after them. It tickles their vanity but nothing else. I tell you men go after shy game, by that I mean women whose resistance lasts a long time. Leave him alone for a time, pretend you’ve forgotten him. If that doesn’t bring him back at least it preserves your self-respect.”

The rest of us dwelt on this matter of self-respect and pride. We discussed it not only with enthusiasm but with a sort of perverse fury. The sorrows of our painted friend had become our own, we met them with all the protestation, all the vengeance of our warped lives. The words pride and self-respect were particularly abundant in our conversation during these feverish moments. Had we not met every sort of privation with these very words ?

But for Painted Face these words were as meaningless as an empty wine barrel to a drunkard. . . . She told us with the same intensity the restaurant where her friend and his mistress had lunched, in what theatre or cinema she had seen them on Saturday or Sunday. These preoccupations took her whole time and energy until the day when “ the other one,” seeing her, asked ironically : “ Who is that old girl who keeps her eyes pinned on you ? ” And the young man replied, just as ironically :

“ It is one of father’s old girls, unless I’m mistaken.”

That remark was the death-blow to the hopes of our painted friend. After that day we did not know what to call her. She put on no more paint. Her hair, which after having first been black, had been blonde for several years, was now a mixture of black, white and gold which would have been comical if one had not seen, just below it, her eyes red with tears.

We called her Beaten.

To pay off her creditors, she had sold her good clothes, and her few jewels. She had no more need for them. A black coat and an old hat put on hastily made her look like the rest of us. She too, like us, worked herself up about the high cost of living, darned her stockings in the train, and asked for the recipes for things she wanted to cook. She was, however, more quarrelsome than us. She was specially pitiless for women who made up their faces, and all the more so if they were accompanied by men.

“ Look,” she said, pointing out a rouged woman, “ How can anyone make up like that ? If I had put as much stuff on my hand it would be better looking ! And who for ? Good Lord, for that man ! If she could only be sure she’s not duped. But there are such things as honour and dignity. Apparently she never heard of them.”

A quarrel began. The man intervened, and Beaten hurled in his face all the insults which were meant in her heart for her friend.

Beaten did not talk any more of the "Great Day." Along with her dream of romance, she had lost faith in the "Great Day." If one of us made some allusion to the question of social justice, she shrugged her shoulders and cried out ironically :

"Words, words ! Sugar-pills made to be swallowed by stupid people like us. The world was made this way and it will stay this way. If the 'Great Day' comes it will simply be for the top-dogs to round out their respectable stomachs a bit more. You, me—all who are made like us will always look at life's banquet from far off ; we'll be always on the side-lines."

Now that she was alone, Beaten had no more idea than I had what to do with her week-ends. Mondays she joined us, revolted and pale.

"I can't endure this life," she said. "I see myself alone in those four walls. I want to shout ; the silence drives me crazy. I'm positively jealous of your resignation. Not a breath stirs, nothing moves. Oh, I wish I were made like you. Have you any idea what it's like to be alone after having known moments when you wanted to die of joy in the arms of your beloved ? No, you can't understand ; you're lucky."

It was again the one with the liver who made the discovery :

"Do you know what I think ?" she said one day, turning to the owner of the three cats. "Aren't your cats soon going to have kittens ? Couldn't you give some to her ? She would look after them. It would help her. I've been through the same thing, and believe me, if I hadn't my liver to look after, I would have asked you for a few kittens to keep me company."

Beaten bounced with anger :

"Me ? Look after cats ? You suggest that for *me* ? Get it out of your head ! I'd never do it—never ! Why, I've always made fun of old maids looking after their pets. Cats ! Me ?"

But a couple of months later, when the last bits of guilt had fallen from her dreams, it was she who turned one day to the owner of the three cats to ask her, with an embarrassed air :

"Listen, I've been thinking. When your kittens are ready to be weaned—could you give me two ? I would look after them well, and then, during our journeys you can tell me how to raise them. You will give me two, won't you ?"

She had taken her place in our ranks, she was one of life's cast-offs—shelved.

AUNT FELICITY'S DIP

A TALL TALE

By GEOFFREY COMPSTON

MY Aunt Felicity is an enormous woman, a woman embarrassing to be seen with. There is no question whatever of sitting by her in a bus, the amount of seat she does not cover would barely support half of a delicate child ; and at the mention of weighing machines she breaks into the jolliest and most infectious laughter conceivable. She has not been on one for twenty years, she cries, and wouldn't care to take the risk.

"And it's not as though you can ring-the-bell-and-get-your-money-back on those things," Phyllis once remarked, regretfully. Extraordinarily keen at that sort of thing, is Phyllis ; she makes nearly as much money out of pressing Button B as I lose at bridge. She is lithe and shapely and tirelessly amove, and I am a lean and muscular fellow myself, and yet there are times when I look from our daughter Joan to my Aunt Felicity with a sick dread.

There lies the horror of having a fat relation. The shame of belonging to her in public places is a burden not unleavened with humour, but the tubbiness of your own eight-year-old daughter can give rise to the most acute fear.

Now you must not imagine that there is anything loud or vulgar about my Aunt Felicity. She is a charming woman and, considering her handicap, is distinctly handsome and well-dressed. She is also the mother of my cousin Richard, a fellow for whom I have the warmest regard ; so warm indeed that when he proposed that we should all go to Weston for the last week in June we agreed with but little demur.

That little demur was due to our being unaccustomed to frequent such civilized resorts.

"Still," said Phyllis, "it's only for a week, and perhaps we're wrong to go always to such lonely places. We may find it ever so jolly and meet a lot of nice people. Besides, I should like to see a bathing machine again."

"Bathing machine !" I cried almost contemptuously. "There won't be any. Heavens ! You're going back a generation."

Joan asked, "What is a bathing machine ?"

"Er——" I began, and stopped.

"It's a thing——" Phyllis began, and stopped, equally at a loss.

"It's a machine that bathes," Richard told her, as though surprised she did not know. "You put a sixpence in a slot and they trundled down and bathed like anything."

Joan wriggled herself against him and told him he was funny, and what

was a bathing machine? He pretended to be frightfully cut up and went away weeping because she had not believed him.

I got a bit of paper and a pencil and tried to draw one of the beastly things; and when I had put the steps between the shafts Phyllis said they couldn't be, and that the shafts must be on the landward side; and I was utterly blank on the question of a window and what propped the machine up when the horse was removed (having given it only two wheels). And Joan said, "Draw a horse, please, Daddy."

I tried. It looked distinctly spiritual—I mean as though Planchette had traced it with wavering pencil—and obviously had no connection with the cart drawing on which it was superimposed.

Joan clucked in amused disgust and said, "You draw a bathing machine and I'll draw the horse."

We tried that, and she achieved a lively camel, with cloven hoofs, the head of a cow, and no neck of any sort. It appeared to be in the shafts and pulling the machine.

We went to Weston and there were bathing machines.

"There's one thing about living with us," Richard remarked as he escorted us to the rooms he had taken, "you do get a decent house, with proper stairs and doorways. One year we lapsed rather on the question of expense, and I engaged digs in one of those streets where the gates stick and the rough-cast looks artificial. I'd been in, you know, and thought it looked very cosy; but I hadn't realized The Truth about Mother.

"She got into the paved hall all right, except for a negligible sinking of the front step, but the doorway into the sitting-room wouldn't look at her, except sideways. When she did get in she very nearly sat on an ordinary chair, but the lady of the house uttered a warning noise when she was half-way down. She recovered the vertical magnificently, and a bronze stag fell off the mantelpiece.

"She asked if the settee was all right, and the lady said, Yes, it was a good one; so she crossed the trembling room and sat on it, and it knelt down at that end like a cow. It really was funny, and Mother caught my eye and started laughing. Oh, my hat! There was that wretched woman trying with one hand to stop her ornaments jazzing off the mantelpiece and steadying a bookcase with the other. I made a frantic dash for the window to save the aspidistra; a shelf collapsed in the whatnot; little bits of ceiling began drifting down; and all the time piano-wires were snapping, pong, pang, ping——"

"Oh!" said Joan, unable to contain her feelings longer, "it's not true, is it, Daddy?" Not that a child does believe such nonsense, but because even while she is laughing at it she wishes she *could* believe it. In a perfectly satisfactory world everything true would be either ridiculous or beautiful; beautifully ridiculous or ridiculously beautiful.

Phyllis is ridiculously beautiful. She had a new white swimming suit, and her skin is dusky gold like her hair, and I imagine that the pride with which I led her and Joan to our first bathe was beautifully ridiculous.

Unfortunately there was something wrong with the sea, and the lovely costume was not white when we came out. Phyllis, with the presence of mind for which women are so famed, bought a much more expensive blue one, and we continued to bathe.

A week is a very short time, particularly if you are having a good time, and at tea on Friday we were still discussing the soiled condition of the Bristol Channel. Richard was explaining at some length how a school, or horde, or shoal, or bevy, or clutch, of turtles had been caught by a volcanic eruption in the ocean bed off the coast of Florida, and had been rendered into soup ; which soup had deteriorated during its journey in care of the North Atlantic Drift, owing no doubt rather to the turtles not having been correctly prepared than to the time of transit ; and so on, when our landlady's knuckles murmured on the door, and she brought in a parcel that had come by post for Auntie.

She put it on the side table and withdrew, and we all politely ignored it. There was a quiet interlude, and then Auntie said we were not very curious. I told her that we had been nicely brought up, but that we were really dying to be told. She said we looked it ; and Richard hung out his tongue and panted, to convince her. Really we none of us cared tuppence, for We Knew Not What Was To Come.

She told Richard to open it. I cut the string and he did so, revealing a large quantity of navy-blue stockinette. We unfolded it between us, backing away from each other as the work proceeded ; at last we shook it free, and our startled eyes met.

" Oh, gosh ! " Richard said ; his face was pale ; we were holding up a vast bathing costume.

Aunt Felicity beamed with amusement and awaited our comments. Thank goodness it was Phyllis who spoke first ! you can trust a woman to find the right approach.

" Oh, Auntie ! " she said, her lovely voice all softened with regret, " they don't warm the water in the Marine Lake, and so early in the season it's most dangerous for people who are not used—— "

" Gracious, girl ! " Auntie cried happily. " Do I look delicate ? I haven't had a day's illness for as long as *you've* known me, and when I was a young woman I swam like a fish. I'm going in the sea to-morrow morning."

There was nothing we could say except what Phyllis had already said. We did repeat it to some extent, enlarging on cramp, rheumatism and pneumonia. We were kindly, humorous, and tactful, all in vain, for Auntie was no more willing to be ordered about than anybody else. In the end we gave it up and became vaguely complimentary.

We left the rooms at about half-past ten on the Saturday morning and went to our usual part of the shore. We had, of course, made a few acquaintances, but there was a merry concourse of people, and it is doubtful if any who knew her saw Aunt Felicity ascend into her machine.

Something impelled me to get into the sea without a moment's delay, and even then Richard, Phyllis, and Joan were before me. Phyllis behaved

very oddly, too, for at sight of me she twirled Joan in my direction and plunged for deep water, crawling rapidly in pursuit of my cousin.

I glanced nervously in the direction of a certain bathing machine, observed with a start that it appeared to have sunk a little in the sand, and turned to my daughter.

"Come along!" I cried, "you haven't been under yet. What about that sidestroke to-day?"

"I'm waiting for Auntie."

I looked round hastily, but nobody appeared to have heard her. "Auntie'll be all right," I said in a low voice; then cheerily once more: "Come on! Let's dive together!"

I caught her hand, but she pulled it free. "I want to see Auntie," she said, and there was nothing to do but wait with her. The two deserters were already far out—I knew Phyllis by her white cap—and I felt a dull despair. What had I done to deserve this? What particular qualifications or gifts had I to warrant my being left in charge of a small girl and a fat lady? Not that I usually found Joan's company other than excellent, but somehow to-day was different, and I felt that the open sea was my right.

Joan is a pretty child and attracts a good deal of attention, and I was terrified that some admiring stranger would notice her stare and enquire into its object. Fortunately, however, the sea was sloshing deeply round the steps of the machines, and nobody out of the water could see the front of them.

Auntie emerged gradually, owing to the stricture of the doorway; Joan and I held hands. At length she was free and, balanced on the edge of the top step, beamed about her. Joan called "Auntie!" and she waved a reply. There was something awful in her happy confidence, and when she put her hands together as though to dive I found myself clutching my wriggling daughter to my bosom. She wriggled only for an instant, until she got her head round, and lapsed into staring again.

Auntie did not dive; that was only play. She descended two steps, till her feet were in the water, uttered a playful Yoo-oo! and plunged.

In an instant the water that had been caressing my thighs was dragging my feet from under me, sucking madly up under the hollow of a great wave, a rearing steep of water that swept me up and enveloped me. There ensued a little age of indescribable wild horror. Unable to do more than spread myself round Joan, my eyes uselessly open in a green and white half-light of streaming water, rolled over and over, scraped and banged against wickedly hard objects, time and again driven to a gasp or a cry where neither was possible, I gulped salt water and found myself sitting in a front garden behind the promenade.

I was sick with pain and going without air. The amount of brine I had swallowed would probably make me sick in a more active way later; for the moment I could but turn over my poor child, to find her white and still.

Bruises, blood, and weariness were naught to this. Staggering to my

feet, I tenderly inverted her, and held her so until water ceased to trickle from her darling mouth and nose. Then I pushed up a broken window of the house, bore her within, and applied artificial respiration. In less than ten minutes she was breathing normally, and I was able to leave her to the care of the lady of the house, and hobble out upon the scene of wreckage.

Wreckage indeed ! Cars, bathing machines, ice-cream carts, deck-chairs, mounds of sand, ruined gardens, the rolling music of drains ; and everywhere anxious groups of people Resuscitating the Apparently Drowned : a melancholy scene for a man in my condition. The knowledge that my child was safe and the hope that my wife had been in deep enough water to survive the cataclysm could not mitigate my physical weariness. Fit only for tended bath and downy bed, I yet splashed on. I must know that my wife was safe, and I must relieve her own anguished fear. For Auntie I had no hope.

I was fully a hundred yards from our bathing station, and all along the way I had to go were ambulances, the Fire Brigade, and the police. There was a sickening amount of work for these skilled men to do ; the wailing of children separated from their parents and the cries of bathers trapped in machines were dreadful. The sun had gone in, and I shivered as I picked a devious way along the footwalk, gazing over the rail—where there was any rail—at the dismal scene.

I heard my name called, and saw my wife below me, her beautiful face unsightly with emotion. I hastily assured her that Joan was safe, solacing my weariness by watching her exquisite features relax. I leaned on the rail and we gazed contentedly at each other—she says my face is restful, like a garden seat—until a hearty clout on my more bruised shoulder startled me into consciousness of Richard.

I could not greet him for a moment, I was too overcome, but through my suffering I dimly heard Phyllis asking him if he had found someone.

" I should think I have ! " he cried. " Trust Mother to come out on top ; I think she's the only person in the place who's still the right way up."

" Where is she ? " Phyllis asked.

" Come and look ; your eyes will fall out. I say, ole man, I'm awfully sorry ; I wasn't thinking. You look absolutely knocked up. Lean on me if you feel rocky." I was glad to accept the offer, and felt much steadier with the excellent fellow's arm round me. Phyllis found a way up and joined us on the promenade, and we moved on towards our own bit of shore.

It was not easy, because of the crowds of excited people and the odd scatterings of wreckage. We had to take to the roadway, and turning towards the sea again came suddenly upon a curious scene, and stood agape.

In an empty space of foreshore, axle deep in sand and faced by a great pool, upright and complete, stood a bathing machine.

We did not question ; we knew who was in it, and from Richard's words and behaviour we knew she was all right. Even as we watched it trembled

a little, and Auntie appeared. We ran down to meet her and found her quite composed.

"I grabbed hold of the steps and went straight up them again," she cried, highly amused at herself. "Whatever happened? Was it an earthquake?"

I could not see properly, and I felt sick; I would go and lie on one of the promenade benches. I turned to do so, and quite thought I did, but when I came round again I was lying on the sand. Richard told me afterwards that it was the most embarrassing case of fainting he had encountered. I had neither collar nor corset to loosen, and the application of any more cold water seemed quite unjustifiable.

We returned to our various homes that afternoon. On Sunday morning I seized the newspaper with curious anticipation, and was overwhelmed:

T I D A L W A V E
SWEEPS
BRISTOL CHANNEL

—
WESTON SWAMPED

—
SEVERN BORE "AN
AMAZING SPECTACLE"

—
From our Special Correspondent

W.S.M., Sunday.

We are still wringing ourselves out . . .

There were also reports from Swansea, Cardiff, Bristol and Minehead. I chuckled, and then I giggled, and then I sat back and emitted lusty Ha! ha's! Phyllis, reading over my shoulder, looked at me in apparent alarm; in fact she quite damped my hilarity.

"This!" I explained, beating at the newspaper. "To think that my Aunt Felicity did this!"

"Did what?" she asked, turning back to the paper.

I let it slide into her hands, and clutched at my chair. She did not know! Great Scott! did nobody know but Joan and me?

"Sorry, dear," I said. "I don't feel well. Is Joan outside?"

"She's in the garden, I think."

Murmuring about fresh air, I tottered out to confer with my daughter.

THE KING OF DOGS

By NEIL HARMAN

I AM a "white hunter" by profession and several years ago, on the eve of one of my departures for Africa, I was presented by a lady of my acquaintance with a magnificent bull mastiff dog. I had to give assurance to the police that I was actually going to take him out of England. Otherwise he would have had to be destroyed.

He was a menace to the neighbourhood in which he lived. At least, that was the unfortunate verdict of the local magistrate, though I found him afterwards to be one of the noblest animals that ever attached himself to a man.

His name was Andy, and the constable who interviewed me, when he heard I was going shooting lions and tigers, made the inevitable joke, "an andy dog to 'ave about in them parts, if I may say."

My friend was embarrassed by her pet, but I was naturally only too glad to take him off her hands, and we soon became fast friends.

On his arrival in Africa, Andy conceived a great dislike to all black men. You may therefore judge my surprise when, some three months later, whilst out in search of game for the pot, I came upon an aged Zulu seated before his small and solitary hut, whom Andy greeted with a show of easy affection. Speechless with surprise, I stood watching, whilst the aged warrior, having carefully examined my dog, disappeared into the house, from whence he soon emerged carrying the strange old-fashioned collar that now reposes upon my mantel. Without favouring me with as much as a glance, the Zulu removed the collar from Andy's neck, and having fastened the other in its place, he reseated himself upon his stool with a great air of satisfaction, and commenced to gaze into space.

My curiosity was thoroughly roused: I strolled over to the old man and seated myself upon another stool close by.

"I see you," said I, which is the Zulu greeting.

"Lord," said the old man, "I see you, rest well."

Determining not to outrage convention (among the Zulus inquisitiveness is a sign of bad manners) I filled and lighted my pipe and remained silent. After the correct period of silence had elapsed, the old man, whose name was Gengyan, made a remark about the weather, and I retorted with an enquiry as to the crops. We thus were now thoroughly satisfied as to our mutual good manners, and it was permissible for me to give vent to my curiosity.

"I see that you have put another collar upon the neck of my dog," said I languidly, as if with little interest.

"Lord, that is true, I have waited many years to restore this collar to the son of Le Inga Umcula, the Great Dog."

"Why should you think that my dog is the son of the one you call the Great Dog?"

"Lord, though I am old and blind, yet can I see a little. Also, was it not I who buried the Great One after the fight?"

"I know not the story," said I, simulating a yawn. "You may tell me."

"I will tell you," said the old man, "for to tell such a story will warm my heart, which is old and cold: also who has a greater right to hear the story of the Great Father than the owner of the son?"

"When I was a young man, and there were but few white men come from over the great water, there came to this country an Ingis, a great and mighty hunter, known to the people as the 'Slayer of Elephants.' With him came a dog who was indeed a king among dogs, being in size like a young bull, and strong as three men in their prime, of so fierce an aspect that when he spoke, there was no man so brave that his heart turned not within him.

"As of the dog, so were the people in great fear of the Ingis himself, for though a great man and rich, he had no joy in it, but in his eyes there was always a great sadness. The people said, 'Here is a man who fears not death, for see—his spirit is surely now in the land of shadows: a man who himself seeks death is always to be feared by those who themselves seek only to live for ever.'

"Now the Ingis sought a servant, but could find none, for the fear that was in the hearts of all who looked upon him made angry the heart of the Great Dog, his servant, so that he sprang upon them and sought to kill them. But my father, being a great witch doctor, whose business was with spooks, was not afraid, so having beaten me well with a great rod, he sent me forth to the camp of the Ingis, bidding me to serve him faithfully that I might grow brave in his shadow. Also he told me that if I hid from him but a little stick of tobacco that the Ingis might give me, he would put a strong and terrible spell upon me.

"When I came to the camp of the Ingis and his servant the Great Dog saw that at last there was come a servant to his master who was brave, he welcomed me, and the Ingis, being much pleased, gave me two sticks of tobacco and told me that henceforth I should serve him.

"Now when I had put wood upon the fire of my master, I made a fire for myself at a distance, as a servant should, and sitting before it consulted with myself: and after some time came to the conclusion that perhaps even the spirits would be afraid of the Great Dog: also all men know that the spirits are shy of white men, more especially the Englesi. This being so I would say nothing to my father of the tobacco, but instead would smoke it in the pipe that I had stolen from him.

"Thus up and down the wide country of Zululand I hunted with my Lord the Ingis and grew brave in his shadow. But the Ingis he came more and more sad, so much so that it seemed to me he sought death, and the King of Dogs, knowing this, watched over his master and saved his life

many times, till stories of his strength and bravery were upon the lips of all men. Until at last a spook, in the shape of a leopard, came from the land of shadows to fetch the Ingis. He, knowing not, shot it, but being a spook, he only wounded it. It ran away, and being nearly dark we could not follow, but must make a fire and sleep until the morning.

"Now, though not knowing the Ingis slept, his servant, the Great Dog, knew that a spirit had come to fetch his Lord. Therefore, he could not sleep, but all night long must walk round his master, sniffing the wind and waiting for the spirit.

"When morning came, thinking that a spook would not come in the sun, forgetting that it was in the shape of a leopard, the King of Dogs, being weary with watching, slept.

"The Ingis, taking his cloth, as was his custom, walked down to the pool, five spear throws away, to wash, whilst I made coffee.

"As I was blowing upon the fire, the wood being wet with dew, I heard a great cry, and springing to my feet, beheld, down at the pool, the Ingis my master upon his back on the ground, at his throat a leopard. The Great Dog being now awake, we rushed down together, but the leopard was gone, and our Lord had passed to the land of shadows.

"At first, thinking his master wounded, the Great One cried piteously, licking the dead face of the one he loved, but on seeing him dead, he gave a great cry, and his nose to the ground, bounded off after the spook.

"I, having buried the Ingis, returned to the house of my father, which is on a hill, and having told him all, we waited. The Great One tired not in his hunt for the spook, but through rain and storm, light and darkness, he followed his enemy. Sometimes I would hear his great voice crying vengeance in the distance, then through the bush would come the leopard—now thin and tired. Soon after would follow the King of Dogs, and so his great voice would become fainter and fainter, until it died in the distance.

"At last there came a runner to my father's hut saying that the chase was nearing its end. Therefore my father, together with many men—for all men talked of this thing—quickly made his way to the last place where the Ingis had camped, this being upon a little hill, from whence one might see for many miles. As we waited, gradually there stole upon our ears the sound of the voice of the Great One, very faint and far away, gradually becoming louder, until the moonlit bush rang with the fierce triumphal cry of a warrior to whom victory is in sight.

"Into the clearing by the pool below came the spook, so tired and thin that scarce could he put one foot before another, and at the pool he stayed to drink. Soon upon the edge of the clearing appeared the 'King of Dogs.' Seeing his enemy before him, he gave one last great cry, and hurled his great gaunt, starved body at the leopard. Snarling and screaming, the leopard slashed his sides with its great claws, until the blood streamed upon the ground, and thus they rolled upon the ground, always the leopard, though seeming to do more damage, giving ground before the dauntless,

blood-covered dog : until, weary, the spook paused for a minute and, looking into the eyes of the Great One, seeing no fear, his heart turned to water, and he strove to turn away. At that instant the jaws of the Great One closed upon its throat, and Lord, we that watched knew that the end was near, though the spook struggled as only a spook could : though the Great One was beaten many times upon the ground, still in the end the King of Dogs conquered.

"When we and the men that followed had reached the pool below, the Great One still held the neck of the dead spook. But presently, as if hearing a voice, he looked up, and wagging his tail, rolled over dead upon the grass. We buried him like a warrior, sitting by his master the Ingis."

For some time the old Zulu sat quiet, then, sighing, he looked at me.

"Lord," said he, "the other day an Ingis of those which are called Godmen, told me that because I am old and wicked I shall not enter the kraal of the 'Inhorse Umkulu' (Great Chief God) ; when I pass into the land of shadows, which soon I must do. But Lord, I don't mind, for they say that the Great Dog may not enter either, so he will be waiting for me at the gate. Sometimes, Lord, I know that our old master the Ingis will come to the gate and speak to his servants."

There you have the story of the great iron-spiked dog-collar that rests upon my mantel. It was worn for many years by my friend Andy, who, true to the tradition of his gallant race, died in saving me from a wounded buffalo.



NOON

Woodcut by E. R. PAYNE

THE HEAD

By DONALD ATTWATER

ANASTASIA lives in a rather grand street in the S.W.1 postal district of London. It is one of those streets of such solid and convincing ordinariness that even one's experience of the surprisingness of things can make no headway against it, though the very fact of Anastasia's living in it is sufficient demonstration that anything might happen there. Being S.W. and grand it is off my beat, but when I do find myself in the neighbourhood I always call at number 80—chances of seeing Anastasia are not to be wantonly missed.

I was there one afternoon last autumn. Anastasia was in and alone. Presently she asked me if I hated dead bodies. I said no, but that if they were mangled and bloody they made me sick, literally, not figuratively.

"Well," she said, "I've been wondering if you could do something for me."

I made the required gentlemanly noises, with the prudent reservation that goes with them.

"I've got a mummy," she said, as if that explained everything.

"I know," I replied, "I've met her."

"No. An Egyptian mummy. Its head."

"?"

"Yes. It was given to me by somebody who picked it up in some ruins in Egypt. I want to get rid of it. You've got a garden, haven't you? I thought perhaps you might bury it—deep."

"Have you got it here, in the house?"

"Yes. Upstairs. In a biscuit tin."

"Might I see it?"

"Yes—but you won't scream or faint or anything? Some people can't stand it."

I promised. "It smells," she persisted.

"I don't mind that. I've been in Jerusalem."

She paused at the door. "I think he's rather beautiful," she said.

"Death often is," I replied sententiously.

Anastasia came back with an ordinary square biscuit tin, whose chromatic label announced that it contained, or had contained, McVitie & Price's Petit Beurre. She put it down on the piano-stool and looked at me.

"Sure?" she asked. I nodded.

She wrenched off the lid and pulled away a wad of tissue paper. There lay the head of an adult male. The mummy-cloth still clung to the front part of the skull, covering the forehead, the right eye and ear, and most of the nose and mouth. The left eye was gone, but the left ear was almost

perfect. Under the right jawbone the skin was broken away and the bone showed cleanly. There was a good bit of russet hair, rather curly, about the left ear and temple. The whole thing was brown and parchmenty, and gave off a strong, acrid smell, not entirely unpleasant. I was at once reminded of that unwrapped mummy in the Cairo museum which they tell you is the Pharaoh of the Oppression. But "rather beautiful" was an understatement; it was very beautiful. I said so.

"I'm glad you like him," replied Anastasia, obviously relieved.

"But why," I asked, "do you want to get rid of it?"

"I don't think it's decent to have a bit of a human body lying about the house. And mother doesn't like it."

"Has it given any trouble?—disturbed sleep, visions, what not, that sort of thing?"

"No."

"What about a museum?"

Anastasia was firm about this. To put a human body in a museum is worse than leaving it in the box-room. I fervently agreed.

Somewhere about now there was a ring at the bell, and Mr. N. was announced. The head was put back and the lid banged down. Mr. N. proved to be a young naval officer, and he stopped to tea. We talked about mummies and eventually showed him the head. He neither screamed nor fainted, but was not very impressed and I think rather puzzled.

Meantime I had been thinking, and after he had gone I returned at once to business. "Look here," I said, "you want me to bury that head in my garden. But I don't think a suburban garden in a Welsh township is a very suitable place. What's more, however deep down I put it, it might be dug up by some energetic gardener in years to come. But I'm quite prepared to take it away and find some place on a mountain top and bury it there. . . . But what about having a photograph taken of it first?"

Accordingly, a few days later, we went together to a photographer's. It would have been an unpleasant experience but for the amazing air of unreality about it all: the head itself was the only thing that seemed real. It was put on a table with a white background, and a battery of lights directed on it and an intelligent and sympathetic man did evolutions with a camera on stilts; meanwhile young ladies from the studio came to have a look. Some were silent, some squeaked, but none of them went within half-a-dozen yards of the head. The photographs were excellent.

On the day I was to leave town I called at number 80 and packed the head carefully in the tin. It occurred to me that in the course of a 250-mile railway journey on a hot day its pungent smell might become embarrassing, so we covered the junction of the lid and the box with brown paper and sealed it well all round. On the way down I made up my mind to say nothing about my undertaking: my wife has a phobia about corpses and it might be frightening for the younger children. I banked on their all being well trained or unobservant enough not to express curiosity about my luggage. On my arrival the first thing that Rachel (*ætat.* 7) said to me was,

"Daddy, what's in that biscuit tin?" I put her off with some nonsense and she soon forgot about it.

I kept the tin under a table in my workroom for some weeks before I had an opportunity to do anything about it. I hadn't the haziest idea where was the best place to take it, but had decided to go out, more or less at random, on a bicycle, so as to get well away from the town. But it is difficult to dig even a small grave without a spade, and to be seen cycling out of the town with a spade over my shoulder would cause comment (very properly). So I sneaked round to the tool-shed to get a trowel. It wasn't there, and I had to enquire its whereabouts in the house, as innocently as might be—I cannot think what they thought I wanted a trowel for: certainly not to do gardening or to dig up ferns. The trowel recovered, I put it together with the head swathed in clean tissue paper into a rucksack and set out.

I was badly handicapped in my search for burial ground, for even the modest mountains of Wales do not readily yield to a push-bike. After riding along a lane for some three miles into the hills, a lane which I knew eventually to peter out, I saw a likely-looking path on my right and took it. Soon I had to get off and climbed 500 feet in a mile, shoving the bike all the time over a very rough path (I did not dump it for it was new ground to me, and I wasn't at all sure I should want to come back that way). And it was hot. At last I reached a col: I had seen not a soul or a dwelling for a mile or more and could see none now, so I dropped the bike and scrambled for some way up a lateral bank. The top was broad and flat, with a fallen dry-stone wall running across the ridge. I walked along this till I came to a peaty patch of ground, where I sat down and began to dig, close in to the wall. I sat rather than knelt, digging between my legs, lest I should attract the attention of any shepherd who might be across the dingles (no ground in the immediate neighbourhood looked down on me), but this did not make digging with a small tool in rush-grown earth any easier; moreover, the handle of the trowel was loose and kept on coming off.

When I had gone deep enough I unwrapped the head, kissed it for goodwill, and laid it east and west in the hole, then said *De profundis* for the good estate of the dead in general, and covered it in. I was sorry to see the last of it. Over the disturbed earth I laid many stones from the fallen wall, and so well covered the tracks that six months later I failed with certainty to identify the exact spot. The Egyptian's head lies about 1,100 feet above sea-level, in longitude 3° 40' west, latitude 52° 29' north (to save any conscienceless person the trouble of going to look for it I add that these figures are false).

When I had finished, and stood up to stretch and light my pipe, I discovered I had been working plumb on the skyline of a farmhouse that lay below the farther side of the hill, not 300 yards away. I had not previously taken the three strides in that direction which brought it into view. With some nervousness I went down to it. I saw the housewife in the fold, and asked her if I could get that way to Llanfair. She said I could, showing no more curiosity than was due to a Saxon lunatic who should bring a

bicycle to such a place. Evidently my exertions had not been noticed. I made my way home, a lovely walk (it was mostly walk for all I was going downhill), and had a very good tea.

If at some far-distant day that Egyptian skull is dug, washed, or heaved up, on the top of a hill miles from anywhere in the middle of Arwystli, I wonder what on earth the archæologists will make of it.

Incidentally, I feel for the man who, having done a murder, is confronted with the necessity of getting rid of the corpse.



COTSWOLD QUARRY

Woodcut by G. R. PAYNE

M. CÉLINE'S JOURNEY

By EDWARD SHANKS

ONCE heard someone describe Mr. James Joyce's *Ulysses* as an essay in "what Catholic experts in confession call 'morose delectation.' " That is a searching phrase, one of the useful fruits of more than a millennium of carefully stored experience. There is no reason to go deeply into its meaning, which presents itself at once to the mind. We encounter it most often in children who suffer from what their elders have now learnt to call "the lavatory complex." They are horrified, and through horror fascinated, by the knowledge that out of their own clean and comely bodies, which on the whole they think well of, issue substances which their elders consider unpleasant and in some obscure way shameful. They brood upon the contradiction and frequently seek a solution of it in a secret, gasping preoccupation with what they themselves most dislike.

This is a brief and brutally simple explanation of problems over which the psycho-analysts have exercised themselves with much subtlety. It seems to me to provide a theory sufficient to account for certain types of humanity and for certain moods which visit most members of humanity. I follow the scientific principle that the simplest explanation which fits the observed facts is to be preferred.

We have, then, our state of mind more or less defined. It is a common one. He who has not experienced it, or, as is more likely, retains no memory of it, is to be congratulated. The general occurrence of it is simply a matter of domestic management. But it becomes a matter of public concern when the secret, gasping preoccupation survives into adult life and ceases to be secret. This survival is one of the phenomena of the literature of the last few years.

As a matter of historical fact, it did begin with Mr. Joyce. *Ulysses* is a book to which justice has never yet been done either by its friends or by its enemies. But I am not concerned with *Ulysses* as a whole, only with its use of certain words and its treatment of certain incidents which literature has for a long time avoided. There can be no doubt that Mr. Joyce was a liberator. He printed words which many of his readers had never seen before except written in chalk on gate-posts and caused a sensation almost comparable to that produced by Mr. Shaw when he induced Mrs. Patrick Campbell, in a year before the War, to utter the word "bloody" right out loud on the stage of His Majesty's Theatre. Mr. Shaw's *Pygmalion* was not a good play, and no extension of the vocabulary available to dramatists could have made it even an important one. But it is a fact that large audiences went to hear Mrs. Patrick Campbell pronounce that one word, released a sigh of shocked gratification when she had pronounced it, and thereafter showed a markedly diminished interest in a rather boring piece.

No one ever pointed out that it had been used on the stage before by the blameless Robert Louis Stevenson (with the assistance of W. E. Henley, who was perhaps responsible). The point was that Mr. Shaw put the word in a woman's mouth and succeeded in opening the way for women to use it.

Mr. Joyce was a path-opener in the same way. No English author (or author translated into English) has yet equalled his freedom, though many have come close enough to make the suppression of Lawrence's *Rainbow* seem now almost as absurdly shocking as the burning of Giordano Bruno. He has not quite conferred his own freedom on his successors. But he has opened the way for indulgence of the mood of morose delectation.

The most remarkable recent example of this mood is *Journey to the End of the Night*, by M. Louis-Ferdinand Céline.* Let me begin by expressing my earnest belief that this is a good book and that I, for what that is worth, should have been a poorer man mentally and spiritually if I had never read it. M. Céline has an amazing knack of putting down on paper what he sees, and he has been amazingly well served by a translator of genius, Mr. John Marks.

My quarrel is not so much with the book as with the tendency it represents, with its probable effect on the minds of many readers, and with the critical opinions quoted by the publishers from France, Germany and America. It is perhaps not surprising that M. Léon Daudet should praise M. Céline. He has devoted his life to proving that the present social structure of France is hopelessly corrupt, and no one can blame him if he calls M. Céline as a witness, even though M. Céline does not perceptibly put forward M. Daudet's own monarchical solution. I have less sympathy with the asinine German critic who calls M. Céline "a modern Rabelais." I find fault with Mr. Lewis Gannett, who tells America that the book is "by turns beautiful, pathetic, comic, breathtaking, nauseating."

I am prepared to accept all of these adjectives except the second. *Journey to the End of the Night* is "beautiful" because it is a work of art that is intensely vivid and always consistent with itself, and it is "breathtaking" as beautiful works of art must be. I shall presently show by quotation that it is both "comic" and "nauseating." But "pathetic"? That it is not, unless self-pity is to rank as pathos.

Self-pity is a very powerful emotion and is as likely as any other to be the mainspring of an affecting work of art. It has played that part here, but let us know it for what it is, instead of seeing in M. Céline the more generous emotion of pity for all mankind. He writes :

He had shocking bad teeth, this Abbé—decayed, dirty teeth, encrusted with greenish tartar, a fine alveolar pyorrhœa, in fact. I was going to talk to him about his pyorrhœa, but he was far too busy telling me things. The things he was telling me never stopped pouring out against the stumps of his teeth under the impulse of a

* Chatto & Windus, 8s. 6d.

tongue whose every movement I discerned. The bleeding edges of his tongue were cut at a number of little places.

It was a habit and, as a matter of fact, a pleasure of mine, to observe small intimate details like this.

A pleasure of his ! A morose pleasure !

M. Céline makes in plain terms a challenge to the civilization in which he lives. There is no difficulty about the short answer to that challenge. The army he describes would have been smashed not merely by the Germans but by any competently directed impi of Zulus before the end of 1914. The colonial administration he describes could not hold down a square mile of territory in Africa for as long as a year. If the French commercial firms in West Africa deserve what he says of them, then they all vanished in bankruptcy long ago and their apparent persistence is an illusion. If all French doctors are like M. Céline's Bardamu and his colleagues, then the average expectation of life in France ought to be sinking instead of rising, as in fact it is.

[But M. Céline is much too formidable a person to be disposed of anything like so easily. To be readable is to be formidable, if one has anything of importance to say, and M. Céline is readable, and the sharpness of his conviction that what he has to say is important makes it important. His persistent self-pity is a social phenomenon with which society will have to reckon :

However much I tossed and turned on my little cot not the tiniest little bit of sleep could I snatch. Nothing that I could do brought me either comfort or distraction. And that is to sound the utmost depths of despair. . . .

What is worse is that one wonders how, to-morrow, one will find strength enough to go on doing what one has been doing the day before, and for so much too long before that, strength for the whole mad business, for a thousand and one vain projects, attempts to escape crushing necessity, attempts which are always still-born, and all just to convince oneself once more that Destiny is unsurmountable, that one must fall back each evening to the bottom of the wall under the burden of a next day each time more precarious, more sordid.

What is the night towards the end of which we are asked to make our journey ? The title of the book, so the title-page invites us to believe, is derived from the song of the Swiss Guards in 1793 :

Notre vie est un voyage
Dans l'Hiver et dans la Nuit,
Nous cherchons notre passage
Dans le Ciel où rien ne luit.

But the Swiss Guard in those days were sustained by a loyalty to something which was temporarily obscured, but which would, they thought, reappear. Their journey was not merely through the night but also through the winter, and winter is succeeded by spring. M. Céline's journey is, in spite of the title of his book, through a night that has no end. The book reaches no conclusion except that death and horror and despair are the lot of man

and that there is no remedy discoverable, so that it is hardly worth while to look for one.

Or perhaps the only remedy is to be rich. But M. Céline proposes that with a cynical intention as part of the general nihilistic conception of his book. The rich have in their sensual pleasures, in their smug security, a drug which protects their minds from any realization of the horrors of the world. They are so many pigs, dulled to drowsiness by repletion, but still pigs living in a filthy sty.

So much, for the moment, for the content of the book. Let us now turn aside to consider its form. This is not entirely new, but M. Céline has written an amazingly skilful specimen of a type which is comparatively new. It hardly follows the "stream-of-consciousness" method, though there are certain points of resemblance. It might, perhaps, be best described as a gigantic development of the famous last chapter of *Ulysses*, though the sequence of events and ideas is more conventionally ordered. Bardamu tells the story of his life in a style which is convincingly conversational and artfully haphazard. One has a sense of being a chance listener whom this sardonic man, without shame or reserves, is trying to amuse and impress. He is under no contract to tell us the whole story. He will omit, on this occasion, episodes which for the moment strike him as dull. He might, perhaps, tell them on another. Thus he passes over in an odd sentence or two the acquisition of his medical degree and, except in a piece of casual retrospect, all his experiences as a student. If we met him again (and the reader feels that he has met him somewhere by chance, most probably in a rather sordid bar) the fancy might take him to tell us of his childhood or of his life when he was studying medicine.

As it is, he begins with the moment when he was moved by some incomprehensible impulse to join the army as a volunteer. He describes the war and a military hospital. He goes to America and works in the Ford factory. He returns to France, becomes a doctor and practises in a poor quarter in Paris. The effect of a raconteur, talking partly to amuse himself and partly to amuse a companion, is maintained throughout these 543 pages with marvellous consistency. There is a typical example of this in the story of the lies with which Bardamu regaled an actress visiting the military hospital. She was so much impressed that she persuaded a poet-friend of hers to turn them into verse for her to recite at a patriotic performance :

On coming to the climax of a period, the most fervid passage in the piece, my actress, turning towards the box where Brandelore and I with a few other wounded men were sitting, held out her splendid arms and seemed to offer herself to the most heroic one amongst us. The poet at that point was faithfully depicting some fantastic act of gallantry that I had attributed to myself. I don't quite remember what was supposed to be happening, but I had certainly not stopped at half measures. Fortunately nothing in the way of heroism is incredible. The audience grasped the significance of her symbolic gesture and the whole hall, stamping excitedly, howling with joy, turned towards us and clamoured for the hero.

Brandelore took up the whole of the front of the box and left the rest of us

nowhere ; he was able, with all his bandages, to blot the rest of us out almost completely. He did it on purpose, the bounder.

But two of the chaps managed to get themselves admired by the mob over his head and shoulders by climbing on to chairs behind him. They were greeted with thunderous applause.

" But it's me it's all about," I nearly shouted at that point, " Nobody but me ! " I knew my Brandelore, there'd have been a brawl in front of all those people and we should even probably have come to blows. In the end it was he who won the day. He wouldn't budge an inch. There he was, all alone as he wanted to be, acknowledging the vast acclamation. We'd been defeated and there was nothing for it but to rush off back-stage, which we did, and there we were made a great fuss of. That was something.

That is, with one reservation to which I shall have to return, a fair specimen of the general tissue of the book. It gives an idea of its easiness of flow and of the multitudinous little flashes of sardonic interest with which the author keeps the reader's interest.

The reservation to which I refer is that this passage does not contain one example of those words without which as a rule M. Céline seems unable to write two consecutive pages. These words have all some reference to bodily activities, either sexual or excretory, generally the latter, and always so introduced as to convey a deliberately unpleasant impression. It is generally held that a profusion of such words and their allied images is evidence of a desire to shock. But I hardly think that this can be what is in M. Céline's mind. Their frequency is indicative of the nature of the world which he has chosen to depict. It is a world the inhabitants of which are rarely out of reach of the smells of excrement and decay, just as they rarely have cause to observe in one another any manifestations of nobility or even ordinary kindness.

Let us grant to M. Céline that he has chosen this world as his subject out of set purpose. We must then regard it as being in the strict sense a fairy-tale world, a creation in the realm of fantasy. Take, for example, Bardamu's story of his voyage to West Africa. He gets it into his head that all the other passengers have formed an insane conception of him as an obscenely evil monster :

Without wishing it, I had begun to take the part of the necessary " infamous unworthy wretch," the scorn of humanity, pointed at through the centuries, familiar to everyone, like God and the Devil, but assuming always a different shape, so fugitive on earth and in life as to be actually indefinable. To pick out this wretch, to seize on him and identify him, exceptional conditions had been needed, such as only existed on our restricted hulk.

It is quite possible to believe that the young Bardamu was not very popular with the passengers of the *Admiral Bragueton*. He may have hinted to some of them, what he says here, that " The mosquitoes had already started in to suck their blood and fill their veins with poisons which cannot be got rid of. . . . Gonococci by this time were filing away their arteries. Alcohol was eating up their livers. The sun was cracking their kidneys. . . . Crabs

had fastened in their hair and eczema covered their stomachs. . . . The blazing light would eventually dim their retinas."

But Bardamu thinks of himself as being worse than unpopular. He regards himself as the victim of an imminent vengeance :

I had escaped hitherto by the skin of my teeth, but it was becoming downright dangerous for me to go to the lavatories. So now that there were only three more days, I decided definitely to renounce all Nature's needs. The porthole was enough for me.

In the end even this precaution does not save him from the threat of violence, and in a scene of spirited farce he temporarily confuses his enemies by the wildest and most rhetorical protestations of loyalty to France, the Army, and "our immortal Colonial Empire !" At this moment the ship comes to anchor and Bardamu seizes his opportunity to escape over the side and to the shore.

As fantastic as this episode is that of the attempted murder of old Madame Henrouille. Her son and daughter-in-law desire to get rid of her and they offer Robinson, Bardamu's friend, a consideration to fix a bomb in the door of the rabbit-hutch which will explode when she goes to feed the rabbits. Bardamu's comment when he divines the plot is :

I wondered whether I wasn't running some personal risk, if I hadn't drifted into some kind of complicity by not seeming to show immediate disapproval of what he was doing. I ought even to have denounced him to the Police. I don't care a hoot about human morality myself—just like everyone else. What can I do about it ? But there are all the dirty little stories, those dirty snippets Justice unearths when a crime has been committed, just to titivate the taxpayer, vicious brute. It's difficult to get away then. I'd seen it happen. Misery for misery, I preferred the noiseless kind to the sort that's all spread out in the newspapers.

Human beings are not quite like this. The episode on board the *Admiral Bragueton* might perhaps be regarded as the vision of a man with persecution mania, though that does not seem to be M. Céline's intention. The story of Robinson and the Henrouilles and that preposterous bomb (which exploded in Robinson's face while he was fixing it) is not to be so explained. Taken in conjunction with the rest of the book, it is evidence of a mind with a disease more general than persecution mania or of a deliberate perversity which, if you will, you may call fantasy.

It would not be fair to say that no one in the book ever exhibits any amiable trait. There is Sergeant Alcide, who supports a small niece at home and worries because "she has nobody for the holidays. It's hard on a little kid . . . " :

Clearly Alcide could rise to sublime heights without difficulty, could feel at home there ; here was a fellow who hobnobbed with the angels and you would never have guessed it. . . . Almost without noticing, he had given these years of hardship, the annihilation of his wretched life in this tropical monotony, to a little girl who was vaguely related to him, without conditions, without bargaining, with no interest

except that of his own good heart. He was offering this little girl far away tenderness enough to make a world anew, and no one would have known it.

There are also one or two prostitutes whom Bardamu admires for their honesty of heart and also, sardonically, for their proficiency in their calling.

But these are rare exceptions in a very long book. M. Céline's fairy-tale is, broadly speaking, written all in one tone. It is an inversion of fairy-tale sentimentalism, and monotony remains monotony, whether it be painted *couleur de rose* or the colour of mud. This is a world of ordure, betrayal, surrender and despair. What one knows of the King's youngest son in this world is not that he will succeed where his elders have failed but that he will be either baser than his elders, or more unfortunate, and probably both.

I should go too far afield were I to examine closely into the question why a book of this sort should have been written just at this point of time by a man of M. Céline's talents. But some reasons may be suggested. M. Céline has had perhaps obscurely, perhaps quite unconsciously, the idea of putting on paper on a gigantic scale a picture of the eternal "grouser," the man who is never content with his reward, for whom nothing is ever right. But in doing so he has allowed himself to be influenced to an hysterical degree by a prevailing mood of disgust with civilization, typified by Mr. James Joyce, which was near enough to hysteria already.

His picture of the eternal "grouser" is surely on a gigantic scale, and no one with less talent than M. Céline could have led the reader successfully to the end of it. As it is, one is obliged to say that his skill makes the last third of the book less difficult to read than one might have expected. After the opening pages, one looks at the long vista of those to come with a sinking heart. After the last page one feels that the disagreeable experience has taken less time than at first seemed probable.

But it might have taken less time still if the author had not striven to mix with it a criticism of the whole of the world in which we live. That world may be in many respects very evil, but the reader is not in the end convinced that M. Céline knows what they are. It is impossible to resist a recollection of the aged Tolstoy crying out against copulation and the propagation of the race. (One might perhaps think of a Sancho Panza to Tolstoy's Quixote.) This may be the expression of M. Céline's most intense feelings, but it is of no real value to a humanity which cannot be persuaded to feel as he does.

KEATS AND JOSEPH SEVERN

A RE-ESTIMATE WITH UNPUBLISHED LETTERS

By B. IFOR EVANS

IN the dawn of 18th September, 1820, two men met at a wharf on the south side of the Thames to set out for Naples in the small and ill-conditioned vessel the *Maria Crowther*. One was John Keats. He longed to stay in England until his consumption worked itself out into death, but friends had urged him that a winter in Rome might bring him back to health. Against his better judgment he had consented to go, and after five months of "posthumous life," as he consistently called it, he was to die at Rome. The other was a strikingly handsome young man of twenty-seven, Joseph Severn, the son of a music-master with moderate means and a large family, who by persistent work and an unbounded belief in himself had become a painter of miniatures, and to the surprise of everyone had in December, 1819, captured the Royal Academy's prize for painting in oils. Fifty-three years later, at the Church of St. James, York Street, the Reverend Stopford Brooke was to preach a sermon on friendship and to choose the attachment of these two men as his illustration. Indeed, for the Victorian age such was the story of Severn and Keats, a close and intimate friendship culminating in the long, perilous and devoted vigil of a penniless young painter for his poet friend. Yet the actual relationship of Severn and Keats is one of the most difficult to comprehend. Keats wrote little about Severn, but Severn wrote voluminously, garrulously, inconsistently and confusedly about Keats. He wrote letters to his own family, to Keats's friends, to Charles Brown, to Haslam, to Mrs. Brawne: he kept journals and wrote up his reminiscences and contradicted himself with a wide disregard for fact. In one of the unpublished* letters Severn warns his brother, Charles, of the danger of lying and exaggeration, and affirms that he will never henceforth be guilty in this way himself:

From this moment, mark me my dear Brother and make the same resolve—it is easy—, I will never in the slightest degree depart from Truth. Even in my moments of Joy when I may be the bearer of good tidings—I have been horrified at the tendency the mind has to falsehood therefore I will examine every word I utter.

Unfortunately the vice of general inaccuracy was too ingrained to be

* The unpublished letters of Joseph Severn which I quote in this article were given by Mrs. Stanley Unwin to the Keats Museum in Hampstead and the copyright of the letters is her possession. I am indebted to her for permission to quote from them and to the Trustees of the Keats House for allowing me to transcribe the letters. My attention was first drawn to them by Mr. Fred Edgcumbe, the Curator of the Keats House and Museum, who has placed his knowledge most generously at my disposal. I have normalized the punctuation and spelling in the extracts from the letters.

removed. Haslam, Keats's methodical lawyer friend, had noted it, and begged Severn to be careful: "Do *this*, Severn, tho' at some sacrifice of your inherent dislike of order and of obligation to do a thing—do it, if but because I ask it."

In the early 'nineties William Sharp, Severn's only biographer, had the whole of the available material on Severn placed at his disposal. Any-one reading that volume can see how fresh is much that it contains, but it is a work hastily put together, and with some of Severn's letters before me I can affirm that Sharp at times shared Severn's distaste for accuracy. He will omit a passage from a document without any indication that he has done so, or modify a phrase, or even telescope two records into one. Now the Severn material is scattered: how widely scattered cannot at the moment be ascertained, nor can the full story of his relationship with Keats be reconstructed, but from the batch of letters in the Keats Museum at Hampstead the complexity of the problem can at least be seen.

The first and most tantalizing problem is the degree of intimacy that existed between Severn and Keats before the constant companionship of forty-three days on board and of four months in Italy. Severn himself portrays it as a close friendship, maturing at certain periods to an almost daily communion. But as in one place he records 1813 as the year of his first meeting with Keats, though probably they did not meet until 1816 or 1817, it is obvious that his unsupported assertions are of little value. From Keats's side there is little to record and nothing to suggest any profound intimacy. Two of George Keats's letters to Severn are expostulations begging him not to feel neglected—"What a most unconscionable fellow you must be for fearing my brother has forgotten you without knowing the 'how' and the 'why.' Take my assurance that he has not"—and one of John Keats's few extant letters to Severn is to tell him that a business appointment prevents a meeting. Too much must not be argued from this. Severn had a much more limited circle of acquaintance than Keats, and the hours that he could spare for social pleasures were few. There are records of amusing evenings at which Severn was present, and there is a reference to "a crib" at Wentworth Place where he could sleep when he went up to Hampstead. Still an impression remains that Keats kept a certain distance where Severn was concerned: he was interested in his art, but there is in the extant letters of Keats to Severn just the suspicion of formality. Sharp, who had Severn's own journals before him, does not claim that any close contact existed between the two men in the period immediately before the Roman journey. Nothing illustrates this more forcibly than Severn's ignorance of the actual relationship of Keats to Fanny Brawne. Towards the end in Rome he must have known from the letters of Mrs. Brawne and of Keats's friends, but even then it is doubtful if he understood. Fanny Brawne saw Severn at least once, in July, 1819, and from a passage in one of Keats's letters it would seem that for a moment she may have let her eye pass admiringly over Severn's handsome figure, and then written to Keats that she meant nothing by it. In a general way the evidence

suggests that Severn had a deep admiration for Keats, and that Keats, while he found Severn good company, never admitted him to that close intimacy, which at various times he had permitted to Leigh Hunt, Haydon, Bailey, Reynolds, and Charles Brown.

Why then was Severn chosen to accompany Keats on the Italian journey? Here the evidence is conclusive. William Haslam, who was the "Watts-Dunton" of Keats's circle, the reliable man of affairs to whom negotiations were inevitably entrusted, chose Severn because no-one else was available. Charles Brown would have been the ideal companion, and the irony of the accidents which prevented that happy solution has been told in Colvin's life. Severn went, and it was recognized by everybody that quite apart from Keats he had his own motives in going: for in Rome he might work for the Royal Academy travelling scholarship, his only chance of maintaining himself in his years of training as a painter. To say this is not in any way to minimize Severn's courage in the exploit. He was throwing up his employment at home, his developing practice as a miniature painter, his family distrusted the project, and his father was aggressively hostile: he had no supporters, no resources, and no Italian. He was prepared to take a gambler's plunge for fame and success, and Keats's ill-health gave him the opportunity. Never once, not even when Keats was dying, did he lose sight of his own purpose in the Roman journey, but equally he never disregarded his duty to Keats, and in the last days he attended him with a deep affection and a remarkable power of endurance.

Keats, then, set out from England with a man whom he knew well, but with whom he had no great intimacy, and, what is more important, it would have been difficult to discover in the whole country two men more ill-assorted in their motives, their temperaments and their condition of health. For Keats the journey was death; for Severn it was life. Keats was not only a sick man; he was one who had resigned everything, friends, verse, and even that last desire to stay in England, somewhere close to Fanny Brawne. He had only one wish, that his "posthumous life" might end and death come quickly. Severn was on the threshold of his greatest adventure, and still young enough to expect the whole of life to revolve around his mood. He had loathed his apprenticeship as an engraver when he had been "popped unwittingly into slavery and doomed to stab copper for seven long years": and now there was a chance for freedom, even though it was a perilous chance. The contrast, and incompatibility, would have been clearer to the biographers had it been in Keats's nature to complain. In the whole range of his letters there are but few complaints, and the phrase that escapes him in one of his letters from Naples is therefore significant: "Severn now is a very good fellow," he writes, "but his nerves are too strong to be hurt by other people's illnesses." Severn had known ill-health, but this man, who lived to be eighty-six, and who retained in his late seventies the faculties and almost the appearance of a man of fifty, had not the imagination to sympathize with ill-health in others. Like many robust people, and especially the favoured sons of large families,

he could be deeply interested in his own ailments. In 1822 he occupied two pages of a letter to his sister Maria with an account of a somewhat commonplace complaint, an illness resulting in the effects of a new cheese on "a disordered stomach," a matter put right by Dr. Clark with a "tremendous dose of physic."

It was Severn's physical strength, and the very absence in him of the subtler forms of imaginative sympathy that allowed him to keep his head as he watched over Keats day and night in February, 1821. He retained throughout those harrowing weeks a resilience, a belief in himself, and in the inevitability of his success. He could turn from a mood when his whole spirit seemed lacerated by Keats's approaching death, to one of detachment, of genial, easygoing chit-chat, of gaiety even if it be an assumed and mock gaiety. Sharp has quoted the most moving letters which Severn wrote to members of Keats's circle in these last days, but he failed to set beside them the family letters which Severn was writing at the same time. The most poignant of all the letters in Sharp's life is that written by Severn to Haslam on the day before Keats died :

O, how anxious I am to hear from you ! I have nothing to break this dreadful solitude but letters. Day after day, night after night, here I am by our poor dying friend. My spirits, my intellect, and my health are breaking down. I can get no one to change with me—no one to relieve me. All run away, and even if they did not, Keats would not do without me. Last night I thought he was going, I could hear the phlegm in his throat ; he bade me lift him up on the bed or he would die with pain. I watched him all night, expecting him to be suffocated at every cough. This morning, by the pale daylight, the change in him frightened me ; he has sunk in the last three days to a most ghastly look. Though Dr. Clark has prepared me for the worst, I shall be ill able to bear to be set free even from this, my horrible situation, by the loss of him. I am still quite precluded from painting, which may be of consequence to me. Poor Keats has me ever by him, and shadows out the form of one solitary friend ; he opens his eyes in great doubt and horror, but when they fall upon me they close gently, open quietly and close again, till he sinks to sleep. This thought alone would keep me by him till he dies ; and why did I say I was losing my time ? The advantages I have gained by knowing John Keats are double and treble any I could have won by any other occupation. Farewell.

Set this extract beside the letter which Severn wrote to his sister Maria. It is commenced on 21st January, but the concluding passages are written within twenty-four hours of the letter to Haslam :

Rome. Sunday 21st Jan. 1821

My dear Maria,

Away from you all I feel my Sundays pass the heaviest. Today is going drearily so I will sit down and dine with your pictures,* for my only real pleasure is the remembrance of you all. Here it passes in my mind. "Is Joseph come ?" "Why he always comes when dinner is over." "Ah !" says my poor mother, (Heaven

* The miniature of the whole Severn family which Severn had painted before he left England. It is now in the Keats Museum at Hampstead.

preserve her to see all my views accomplished and in them myself happy), "Ah! and all the nice cabbage cold." "Yes!" says my father, "drat the young dog. Are you sure Charles he said that he'd come?" "O, yes, he was all ready. I left him——" "O! here he is, here he is." See the conquering hero comes, peel your turnips, pick your plums, wines prepare and dishes bring, round the table make a ring, see the dog's-tail Joe advance. But I cannot be merry, unless I be with you, yet this train of thought always helps me to be happy. O! the English welcome I always had at my dear Father's table, the kind and loving faces I always saw, the happy, contented look of my father when I visited him and the oftener the more happy he seemed, the anxious, tender-hearted look of my mother with all her kind inquiries, then the good-natured laugh of my dear Maria and her eye looking at me from head to foot to see that her Joseph was all neat and clean, hearty Tom looking at me and some new Music at once, eating his dinner and playing on the organ at the same time, and the good Charles giving me his seat. O! this is woven round and round my heart, and was my heart the only repository of my ambition this would be my everything, but it is not. My heart will be for ever at my dear home, but my head is restless for fame and fortune, and now after fretting on the waves and travelling 2500 miles, here I am above a thousand miles away from you, and where I may be next I know not. But I hope here in Rome as an Irishman would say.

Feb^y 11th You will be glad to know that I am in good health and with the best prospects, yet still by the side of my dying friend, and there will I remain until he is no more. For my dear Maria, without me he would have died long since. I have kept him alive and given him every chance of recovery but I fear it is all over with him. It is an awful task for me, yet how astonishing that I bear up so well. He has been confined to his bed two months, during which time I have scarce ever left him, except just for a run out for a mouthful of fresh air. But no more of this letter on a subject so sad. I am writing to keep up my spirits, therefore I must not write of this. I am now trying to paint a picture for the Royal Academy.* My sketch is very much approved of. It is still dismal. The assassination of Alcibiades, a Greek warrior of great beauty and valour. The assassins surrounded his villa, set it on fire and then prepared to kill him should he come out. He did come out, but his appearance was so terrible so god-like, that they all ran frightened to a distance when they drew their arrows and killed him. This picture will be the same size as the last.† I have a daily visit from the Architectural Student who is now here from the Royal Academy. His time expires in July next and he seems certain I shall succeed him. He says it depends entirely on myself. Very well does it. Then I shall continue as I did with my last picture, and do my best to be away from you three years. Three years! O! how can I bear it! For I am sometimes thinking that I have gained all I can here for my painting, but I must be in the wrong.

Feb. 14. Tell Father that the only advantage I can see here over good old England is the beauty of the winter climate. At the beginning of January all the trees were in blossom here, and in our houses we have roses blowing, when I know *you* have nothing but your bellows blowing. But the summer here is so immensely hot that everybody able leaves the place, if not turned to butter why they turn to clay. They have no musical Instruments worth a curse. The best toned instrument here is a Chamber-pot. The Romans make them thick, and it is astonishing what a fine tone is produced by kicking them. Could not a new Instrument be made from

* The picture with which Severn gained the Academy's travelling scholarship.

† The picture for which Severn had been awarded the Academy's Gold Medal.

these ? Let it be called a Chamber-Organ. The bell of St. Peters is very fine in tone. I think better than our St. Pauls.

February 19th. I have just got your letter my dear Maria. O ! I have shed tears and tears of joy to find my dear home the same, all happy and all well. I thank God for this greatest blessing. You have written me just such a letter as I wanted. O ! you cannot know the delight it is to me. It is a beautiful treat for me. I have finished my breakfast with it. These are the particulars on which I can feed my comfort. You must write me such another. Never mind about good writing and dont inconvenience yourself with it. Sit down now and then and say any particulars, and, if you can, get father to write me a little. It will be like another picture of him. Ever so little, I shall be much gratified to have it, and Sarah, will I know give a little in black and white. I shall make her my best bow for it. I hope Tom wont write with his fiddlestick, will make small writing that I may have a good deal for my love as well as my money. Tell father that the Marquess Canova* and I had a " pipe and pot together " at our first meeting, that he was exceeding kind to me. The letter of recommendation gave me a most friendly welcome. I mean our President's letter. He has promised me his service at any time, and has already written to his Holiness the Pope to permit me to study in any of his palaces. He seems to think highly of my views, particularly from my receiving the gold medal amid so much contest. This sets me very high here. There is great expectation from my works. I think to go very far beyond any painter I have seen so far. They have no original and native idea of Painting. They seem all dependent on other masters, nothing but imitation ! Nothing but the same thing over and over again. Now on this point what I do know is my own. I find myself a real English man amongst these foreigners and have determined that there is nothing like or equal to England. Tell him that I continue to think of painting from the English History when I return. I hope to glean all the knowledge and beauties of foreign art, and apply them to the Annals of my own Country. This has never struck any painter. Is it not a lucky thought ? I am now thinking of my future on the plan of Raphael's pictures in the Vatican Palace. One picture I have in mind in the Golden Age of England, the Court of Queen Elizabeth, with portraits of all the distinguished folk of her time, Sir W. Raleigh, Shakespeare &c. &c. &c. To this I hope to take a tour all over England, to collect the antiquities and records for my purpose. Tell Father something tells me that he will go with me on the tour. I know his love for all these old ruins.

My object will be to propose my plan to some English Nobleman. Father must not doubt my success in this, for there are several painters here sent out by persons of fortune. I look forward with great hope and delight. I feel that I shall be successful. Since I am here all my soul has opened for Painting. I have been led here by Providence. Thank God ! For it was the height and everything for my studies. Tell my Mother that poor Keats has lived on bread and milk for a month past. It is the only thing he can take. I get very good dinners for twop[ence], with my half pint of wine (for 3 half pence) afterwards. I am obliged to take great care of myself and do. I am looking very well and I can assure her am so. Everybody is showing me great kindness, but particularly the lady I mentioned. She is the wife of Keats's Physician, Dr. Clark. No kindness than can be known to them but is shown us. I have every personal comfort possible, even to cabbage, altho' not my dear Mother's. I make bread and milk three times a day for Keats, for myself, sometimes tea, sometimes Chocolate, or Coffee. My dinner now—I

* Severn had a letter of introduction to him from Sir Thomas Lawrence.

go out for—I have for 1st dish maccaroni. It is like a dish of large white earth worms made of Flour with butter &c., very good. My 2nd dish is fish, and then comes Roast Beef or Mutton, a cutlet of Pork or wild boar. Their vegetables here are beautiful, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, everything good and very well cooked. Then I have pudding every day. “Ah! still *my* Joe,” says my Mother. The puddings are beautiful, rice particularly; plum pudding delicious, they even call it by its English name. The fact is that there are so many English here (about 200)* that it is almost like London. Tell Sarah that I am overjoyed to hear that she is well and doing well. This to me is the most agreeable news in your letter. That she is still salving it out with success. I think of her more than any of you. Her kindness to me has been without bound. Heaven preserve and protect her for it. Tell her that I shall be a smart fellow yet, that at some future time many of the grand things I used to talk with her (by her fireside) will be accomplished, that I make a very good housekeeper now. The Roman ladies here are all what she would call “dowdies,” not the least look of ladies, not the least taste in dress. England is the only place to look and be looked at. Tell her to please to see that the rats and mice do not get digesting my books or finishing my pictures. I know they are very clever at taking sketches. I suppose she keeps my room the same, as tho’ I was coming home to dinner. She is a good creature, she is, “the little cherub that sits up aloft to keep a watch for the life of poor Jack.” Tell Charlotte, poor Charlotte,—O! how unfortunate that I did not see her before I came away—tell her that I hope and pray she may have a nice happy little house with a vegetable-garden for her little ones to run about in, and ever more good health and good fortune. I will not wish her content for she always had it and always will. Tell her that Rome has gates, and that if her dreams are not favourable to me they are story-tellers, so kick their bottoms and teach them good manners. Do remember me kindly to Giles.† Tell him that there is no place but England for trade or comfort. Here and where else I have passed through there is none of either. Tell Tom he does honour to his father. He deserves to be the “piper’s son,” and that I will like Music better and better on his account, from the great “hogmanay” (?) to the bass fiddle, from that to the cat-gut. I will sing praises to the Lord for his success. I will pray that every “solo” he makes in life, that every “movement” may be accompanied still by good fortune, that his happy hours may be—

Feb. 20th. My good natured fire says good morning Maria, so while my kettle is boiling I will give you a little more gossip. Now sit down and make yourself comfortable. How do you do this Morn[ing]? How are they [all] at home? How is Mother? Come now sit down and hear what I have got to say. Pull off your bonnet. You know you dont see me often. It must be now 5 Months, a good long time. What a many changes I have seen in the time, 5 weeks on the seas, 3 weeks of which I never saw land. This was the most entertaining time. We were beset with such rough seas. In the Bay of Biscay we went up and down like a roundabout. We would sit down to breakfast, and on a sudden away would go the Coffee pot into a Lady’s lap, a ham into mine, and the Cabin boy, who was set to hold the table up, would be lying on it. After this my breakfast wou[ld] make another movement, retrograde, over the side of the ship. But what I enjoy’d most was the storms, mostly I was on deck with a great coat. This was a treat to me, the grand sea, waves as lo[ng] as your Shoreditch in a valley, then rushing up like mountains. Another pleasant

* Severn makes this 500 in a later letter.

† Charlotte’s husband.

part was in passing the English coast. Here the wind was against us, and we were many times obliged to land. I would ramble about in the most beautiful places. Studland in Dorset, that was the most beautiful ! Passing through the Straits of Gibraltar is a grand treat. The mountainous Coast of Africa. I made drawings. I made puddings, and I made them all in good spirits. The journey from Rome to Naples is beautiful, the vineyards extending down for miles and miles in valleys and over hills : these are formed with vines festooned from tree to tree in every direction. O how I wish the English had this country. What a fine account they would turn it to. It is thrown away upon these idle beasts of Italians. They crawl about like moving logs. They never [] their arms in the sleeves of their great coats. The young Lady* who sailed with us is now poor creature dying in the same way as Keats. Poor Keats cannot last but a few days more. I am now quite reconciled to his state, yet I fear I shall feel the miss of him. But here everybody is kind so that I shall not feel it. A Gentleman has offered me the use of his Study. Sir William Drummond has engaged me to paint a picture for him. At some future time I have no doubt my dear Maria but here I shall be able to realize a great deal of money by my Miniatures. You see all the English here are rich, and come to buy pictures. They think of nothing but pictures. I should have liked father to hear me blow up a fellow just now in Italian.† I gave him it in style. We are all much gratified at the neutral part taken by the English Government respecting Naples. Well, well, good-bye. I am afraid you cannot make out this letter. It is the longest I ever wrote. When you write dont apologize about it. I shall always be delighted with your good scrawl.

What can be said of the contrast of the moving pathos of the letter to Haslam, and the leisurely, egotistical budget of chat which Severn concocts for his family ? The most obvious but superficial conclusion would be that Severn was not as profoundly moved over Keats's approaching death as he would have Haslam believe, even that he was writing up what friends in England would expect of him. The problem is more complicated than that. Severn in his letters home had to accommodate himself to a difficult situation. He was a beloved son and his family was deeply anxious for his welfare, even for his health. They were not so much concerned that Keats might die as that Severn should catch the complaint. He had to assume an air of well-being and success to reassure them that his adventure was justified. He was further devoted to the family circle. When fifty years later he was Consul-General in Rome he still wrote to his sister Maria, reminded her of details of their home life in the old days, and sent her a small pension every three months : he could even quote to her as an old man phrases from this letter which he had written half a century before. Nor can one ignore Severn's own statement in the letter that he is writing " to keep up his spirits." All this must be allowed, and yet the fact remains that whatever may have been his motive he did actually possess the detachment to write as he did in those last days of February, 1821. The experience of being in Rome, the glimpse of a great world of possible patronage, and

* Miss Cotterell.

† Other evidence shows that Severn could have known only a few words of Italian at this time.

the mirage of future success, gave him even in the worst days a self-centred and self-regarding interest that helped to sustain him throughout the heavy emotional and physical stress which Keats's ill-health was laying upon him. That ordeal would have left more sensitive minds prostrate. On Severn it made undoubtedly a deep impression, but his other purpose, his painting and his innate optimism and irrepressible cheerfulness, could not help reasserting themselves. He had intermittent periods of gloom, as the documents in Sharp showed, but often he saw beyond Keats's death to his own life as a painter, patronized, famous and wealthy, and it required in the circumstances an incredible degree of exuberant confidence to keep that vision in view.

The letter to Maria shows how Severn could write immediately before Keats's death. A letter to his mother probably in March, 1821, sustains the same mood, and by the end of April a letter to his father suggests that he had regained a remarkable degree of any buoyancy he may have lost. This letter, dated April 10th, opens with a long account of the "Alcibiades" picture which he was preparing for the Academy Scholarship. It continues :

O ! how happy I am I came here. Everything I do I am successful in. My Miniatures are very much sought after. I have painted five and got 40 Guineas for them. One was a slap-bang job. There are about 500 English here now, and I can have any number to paint. But this is not all. The attention I receive from the English Nobility here is most encouraging. We are hand in hand, walking in the same places, living in the same houses. Three days ago I had the honour of dining in company with Lord Colchester, the Duke of Hamilton, Lord Rivers, and 3 other superior persons. This is looked on as a most fortunate hit for me. It was by mere chance. They came into my study by mistake and were so much pleased with my pictures that I was invited to dine with them. O ! how delighted you would have been to see how I was look'd up to, to hear them encourage me to go on as I had began. For Historical Painting is scarce known to the English painters here. They have no harmony in the Art, no imagination. If I like I may be a God in Painting here, compared with the others. But poor fellows they are really nothing. Already they look with surprise on my picture, and introduce me as the Representative of English Painting. All the Painters that have been here have been Portrait Painters or Landscape. Now the French and the Italians are very great in History, and the English here look to me to come up with them. This is a glorious place for a young painter, everything at hand, everything he can want. I thank God I am [in] every way successful. [I have] settled poor Keats affairs most victoriou[sly]. In the room [whe]re he died everything was ordered to be burned [according to] the Law here. [They ar]e so afraid of catching the English C[onsump]tion. The rooms have been entirely made new, windows, doors, walls, ceiling, floors, all new. All this I have paid for, but the wretches were cheating me. The Landlady had done the rooms in the most extravagant way thinking that I must pay for it all. But no ! I have been protected by a Roman who has made them just one sixth their demand. I have beat them at every point, but I am an Englishman, and here an Englishman is a God. You would be overjoyed to see how nobly I get on. Everyone tries to serve me. I have received so many presents, and have such respect shown me, that I would not be other than your son Joe, to be Pope of Rome. So you have been

alarmed about the armies advancing. Well you might be. For never was such warlike preparations, such valour in talk, such intrenchments, but I suppose you know it has all gone off with a pop. The Neapolitans are quite forgotten. It is all over. We are just the same here. If the Academy keep me here or not I shall be able to do much better than ever I could in England. It is a fine thing for me to have the Gold Medal here. I am the first for 20 years. This is the reason of my success. The name of a Gold Medal is like Magic everywhere. I have an invitation out to dinner every day but I have only been twice. For I come here to study not to go out to dinner. In 3 months the Council will decide, but everyone here seems sure of my having the pension. The weather here is now lovely. O ! such skies, such Moonlight pieces.

After further comments on painting and remembrances to friends Severn concludes :

Farewell my dear Father. You shall never be disappointed about me. I must improve and have. Farewell. I shall some time send you a Landscape for your gallery.

As appears from these letters Severn found himself immediately after Keats's death the centre of English patronage in Rome. The story of his devotion to a young poet had filtered through quickly, and many to whom Keats was not even a name were moved by the pathos of the human situation. For Severn this success was incredible ; it went to his head like wine, nor is it surprising that for the moment he assumed that his popularity was due entirely to his own prowess as a painter. As a matter of fact he had one asset apart from his painting and his legend in his striking figure and his handsome, well-set head. If his social graces were limited he did his best to improve them, and his talent for music, inherited from his father, more than compensated for any limitations in his conversational powers. Among those who submitted to his charm, and the family letters show how completely she fell, was Lady Westmorland. In 1828 Severn was to marry Miss Elizabeth Montgomerie, Lady Westmorland's ward. Sharp expresses surprise that this lady should show a stubborn opposition to the match. Her displeasure is less inexplicable once the family letters have been read, for she had pursued Severn with undeviating persistence ever since the early months of 1821. Already in July, 1821, she was writing to Sir Thomas Lawrence praying him to appoint Severn to the Academy scholarship, and it would appear that it was more from her pleadings than from the merits of the canvas, which arrived in a battered condition, that the award was made. Further, she found Severn sufficient patronage for him to be confident of his position even if the Academy failed him. In September, 1821, he could write home " I am now in a safe [con]dition with or without it. Lady Westmorland patronized me and will see me righted. She says that she will enable me to paint more Miniatures than I can want." In the same month she had begged Severn to accompany her to Egypt. Severn with his hard-headed ambition had seen that the offer would detract from his prospects in Rome, and suggested that his friend, Mr. Catherwood, should go instead. Lady Westmorland made a show of accepting this proposal, but not for long :

On my return home I find Lady W. has been to my study 4 times and sent her servants to the place where we dine. She soon returned again (draped in deep mourning for the Queen). It was to tell me that her journey was postponed until another season. She required more servants. Her Ladyship again requested me with my friend Mr. Catherwood to undertake this journey next season. I said, "Yes with pleasure." I may then have finished some works to establish my reputation. We are going to dine with her on Saturday. She has written to the Duke of Devonshire of my pictures now in hand. He comes here next winter, and she may do much for me. She is a Lady of such accomplishment, such abilities and such Character that I think it [a] great honour to have her good opinion, and this from her knowing my real state here.

Nor was Lady Westmorland his only conquest. If we can trust the record of the family letters his successes were frequent, though he preserved a practical self-preserving approach to his admirers. In 1824 he wrote home of the attentions of a young lady, who had "a small fortune," but doubted whether such a marriage would benefit his career, and asked his sister and indeed his family in general to advise him on the possible advantages of such a match. So by the end of the year in which Keats died Severn found himself pampered, and petted and as busy as he could wish to be. It is not strange that this astounding good fortune should have so overwhelmed him that he remembered only intermittently the tragedy with which the year had opened. He had much in his situation, and even in his temperament which is reminiscent of Pepys. He had come from a lowly origin through hard work, to a sudden and incredible success. How like a passage from Pepys's diary is the following confession of Severn to his sister Maria in December, 1821 :

When I went first to the Academy a poor fellow without a soul to encourage me, or a friend to cheer me, except this dear Father and his little home of comfort and peace, how could he, or how could I hope for me to be in Rome as the Representative of the Royal Academy with a pension and such a prospect before me as perhaps no other young man can boast.

He had, like Pepys, a zest for living, for every detail of life, a buoyancy that carried him through situations which might have crushed more sensitive natures. Like Pepys too he loved a titled acquaintance, the Duke of Bedford or Prince Leopold, though unlike Pepys he had little interest in the oddities and good-humour of humbler folk. He frequently admits that he sought out friendships to improve his position, though never more frankly than in a letter of 27th June, 1823, to his sister Sarah after he has met Charles Brown, Trelawny and Lord Byron. It would appear from the letter that Sarah was a little fearful that her brother should mix with men of Lord Byron's reputation :

But my dear Sarah, pray quiet yourself on the grounds of my friendship with these men [i.e. Brown, Trelawny and Byron]. My object is my Painting, and by this acquaintance I think [to] be and have been much advanced. It is the misfortune of young Artists to become acquainted with other Artists, and so they go on and never advance in their pursuit, owing to a certain set of narrow rules and certain jealousies.

But here I find men of great minds, deeply learned in Art and Nature, and only differing from me in their pursuits. Our objects are the same. You greatly mistake to think I shall be injured by their bad principals. We never talk of [anything] but Poetry and Painting and Music. They are Men sought after by all the great English who come, but they wont be seen. Think on [how] much I have gained from them. My knowledge has been picked up in their company and yet you find me unaltered either in heart or soul. I tell you a man must be but poorly grounded in his objects and principles to be moved by others. I think I know well how to gain everything for my pursuit. My Friends here, one and all, envy me these connections. Let me alone to find out those friends who can serve me.

I make a point never to know anyone who is not superior to me in fortune or ability, or some way or other, that I may still be raising myself and improving, even in moments of pastime. Tell Tom.

Yet once the first excitement of success had passed the memory of Keats returned and remained with him for the rest of his long life. Already he found that the reputation of Keats was spreading, and soon some honest insight showed him that he owed his success not so much to his own talents as the story of his association with the young poet. He will confess to this sometimes with a frankness which is almost brutal. In October, 1824, he had been staying with a lady and her two daughters, one of whom had according to his letters had a deep affection for him. The mother died, and it fell to Severn to make all the arrangements that were necessitated. This is how he describes the circumstances in a letter to his sister Maria of 4th October, 1824 :

Owing to this Lady's death I have added a number of great and serviceable friends to my future life. Is it not singular that to my acquaintance with poor Keats I owe a great part of my present good fortune. I find it was owing to this that Mr. Erskine first made my acquaintance and then gave me this order for the "Lear." My coming with Keats and friendship for him will be a never fading Laurel. For everyone knows it, as Keats' name is rising and everyone respects my character for it. You would be surprised how often it is mentioned to me and how I am pointed out as the friend of the Poet, Keats. It was the work of Providence for my good, both in mind and fortune. I can never cease to remember it, and be thankful to God for turning to good what I began so carelessly. It was a risk indeed.

A year later he writes on 21st November, 1825, to his brother Tom in much the same spirit :

Betwixt you and I, certainly I have gained more from poor Keats who is dead and gone than from any other source. He introduced [me] to all the learned men I know, and helped me on in my painting by his own great mind, and then his Friendship and death are so interwoven with my name that it will be ever an honour [to] me.

As the years passed the impression of that indebtedness grew in strength in his mind. On April 9th, 1837, he wrote to Tom :

It will be 17 years in October since you and I sailed down the Thames with poor

Keats. I see you now in my mind's eye and the blue coat you had on. I can never forget you. How pale you looked at the scene we had passed* and how I trembled. Yet all this was for the best. For I could not expect to have done what I have done here, or certainly made so many friends who are capable of serving my family.

Severn's later years were crowded ones. He returned to England in 1841. Twenty years later he was appointed to the British Consulship at Rome, and after relinquishing that office in 1872 at the age of seventy-nine he continued to reside at Rome until his death in 1879. In those last decades, amid the pressure of affairs, there arose before him the memory of the year 1821. It was a memory modified by time. The restlessness of his early ambition and the crudity that sometimes accompanied it had disappeared. Even if he never realized that his talents as an artist were mediocre he had come to see his place in the patronage of the wealthy and titled usurped by younger men. Now more than ever before he came to feel that the chance of his journey to Italy with Keats had been the greatest event in his life. The admirers of the poet sought him out, and sometimes he would give them a scrap of Keats's manuscript as a souvenir. Even a letter of Keats's could now be sold for Maria's benefit to Sir Charles Dilke for five pounds, a poor bargain too, as Severn realized a little later when he heard that someone had obtained £13 5s. for a letter. He persisted with his painting, but now in his eighties his fingers were often cramped with rheumatism. On 21st March, 1875, there occurs a gentle, pathetic passage in a letter to Maria, which contrasts vividly with his early confidence :

My pictures, unfinished, stand around me like starving children and reproach me with cruelty but I hope to pick up as the spring advanced.

The spring did come, and he felt "bobbyish" again and painted once more, though now it seemed to be pictures of Keats or of incidents from his poems that alone found buyers. On 5th October, 1877, when he was eighty-six, he wrote to Maria :

I have done a life size portrait of Keats satisfactorily and it seems to me very like the dear fellow. What a fortune it was, my meeting him in my early life for he has been my stepping stone and is *even now*.

And so it was to the end. Everything that had contact with Keats had helped him, and even his manuscripts of Keats's poems he left to his friend and doctor, Signor Valeriani, to repay his indebtedness. On 1st May, 1879, he wrote to Maria :

You'll be amused to hear that the MSS. of Keats have risen in price from £10 to £100 and I have given them to my good Dr. as I couldn't give him cash for his kind attention is very great.

Three months later he died.

* Possibly a reference to the fit of temper of Severn's father immediately before Severn's departure.

THREE SCORE AND MORE

By ROBERT HERRING

LITERATURE has often commanded respect : the arts generally receive support exaggerated, by those whose emotions are denied other channels. Love itself, as a cross between reassurance and revenge, has its followers. Swimming, singing and sweet-making have won praise as pastimes : people keep pythons as pets and have even been known to adopt plumbing as a profession, to seem happy therein. But despite these separate distractions, Life as a whole has few friends. Almost the first thing that men did when they found themselves in it was to decide that such extraordinary unpleasantness could not be true. Life was an illusion. Recovering their breath, they expended it, according to their temperaments, in declaring this world to be either a preparation for worse to come or a means of meriting better. But all were at one in disliking it as they found it and in showing no eagerness to depart. The whole history of Life is a peculiar combination of complacency and complaint. Most of our energy we devote to prolonging the agony of what we so hate ; our arts spring from the desire to leave some part of aspiration manifest and immutable. We cling to Life—for no love, but as a limpet clings to a rock or a dun dogs a debtor, hoping that persistency will find some result, if not reward, at the end.

It is said by those who probe deeply that this distaste comes from our fear of death, much as the child's joy in jam is spoilt by suspicion of the powder so surely provided. The analogy fails to hold, for the powder is made less noticeable by the jam, whereas every minute of living only makes death more ambiently felt. From the probers one turns to the practitioners, to those who have best cheated Time's scythe and Atropos' shears. I have a book, published in the last year of the eighteenth century, which purports to record all those who from A.D. 66 to 1799 held out to a hundred. It was compiled, printed and sold by James Easton, of Salisbury High Street, and it contains the names, age, place of residence and year of decease, "together with anecdotes of the most remarkable," of 1712 persons. Subsequent owners, including myself, have added, with cuttings, notes on margin and page and memoranda stuck in, particulars of centenarians of their knowledge, so that the book remains as up to date as it was when James Easton brought it down from A.D. 66 to 1799. It cannot be an accurate chronicle. Early entries were a matter of hearsay, and news was not so international in the eighteenth as it is in the twentieth century. Certain owners have also in their zeal deviated from the original aim of the book, so that there is a list of sculptors, who were only elderly, not one of them being more than ninety, and also details as to twins, slightly *mal à propos*. It is natural that there are most entries for the years

nearest publication, and as for our own age, ten years ago there were 110 centenarians in England and Wales, while thirty years back there were 141. If, contrary to general opinion, we do not live as long as we did, it must be borne in mind that "the phenomenon may find its explanation in the more critical attitude adopted in late years by those whose duty it is to collect the local census returns, particularly in Ireland." But, by and large, the book serves for a curious enquiry and is the most complete catalogue of its kind that I know.

One might think, in turning these pages, that these centenarians would have something to say, and some problems of their own with which to surprise us, since they have had time, or at least more than most, to get used to the knowledge of ending, having themselves shown uncommon skill in postponing that end. For men may be cut into three classes, falling naturally into those who have wished to live long—and these dying before change of mind have been called "loved of the gods." There are those who have determined to last as long as they could—even so they have achieved their end. And, finally, there are those who, without expressing any opinion on the matter, have lived longer than they expected and, for all that one can tell, may have wished.

For these, whose names are about to be mentioned, preserve a reticence which, while admirable, is tantalizing and even ungracious from those who might have been expected to know, or to have known, so much. And though if, while not crying on reaching their century, "At last I begin to live!", they also spare us the news, so often handed out to despairing nephews, that youth is the best time of our lives, and may be pardoned on that score; yet, while they have naturally forgotten their youth, they are remarkably unforthcoming about their age. Modern centenarians are more talkative—but they have the modern journalist to spur them, to put ideas in their heads and an odd half-crown into their pockets. The bait of publicity, after a lifetime or more of neglect, seems to bring contemporary Methuselahs to the surface with a smack, and they are ready to give their opinions of flying, Larwood and the present-day girl with the best, if that is the word. But they are silent, as were their predecessors, on what we would like to know—would they do it again? Perhaps they don't know. They have done it. That is enough. Perhaps it is.

At any rate, their age seems something to which they are accustomed, for Mrs. Bousfield, when 103 at Nottingham many months past, asked, "Can't a person live a little longer than other people without being pestered and pampered?" There is one thing, however, on which centenarians will enlarge, and that is the diet on which they have lived. We know that Appollonius lived from A.D. 95-130, because he "at the age of 16 renounced wine, women and all kinds of flesh." That he was wise in so doing is proved by Attila, that king of the Huns, who might have been with us for more than 124 years had he not at that age died of excess at his wedding banquet. A thousand years later, Lewis Comaro, who reached 104, discovered "about the age of 36 that his life was endangered by his excesses. Being

sensible of his folly, he resolved to live a life of the strictest temperance, and though at 70 he was overthrown in his coach, whereby his head was broken and a leg and arm dislocated, he recovered without any other application than a single bandage." This is a moral that cuts both ways for, by showing that the abstemious may live long enough to endure unexpected accidents, it has as corollary the truth that a life of gay gourmanderie would the earlier have put one beyond such minor mishaps as a toppling tumbril. It is recorded that Francis Cossit, during his 150 years, "occasionally ate a raw new-laid egg," and longevity's diet swings from this to the other extreme of John Warren who, in 1786, would eat three pounds of meat and drink three pints of ale at a meal. Plenty of entries record, as was said of Mrs. Martha Preston in 1773, that "until within a few years of her death, few women drank more," or George Kirton, for 125 years of Oxnop Hall, Yorkshire, ". . . No man till within ten years of his death made more free with the bottle." But in the main the less heartening camp of Henry Jenkins, of whom all that is known is that "his diet was coarse and sour," carries the day, and it is with natural relief that the biographer pounces on the Reverend Mr. Davis, who was 105 and "always drank moderately of wine." "What," cries James Easton, "will the advocates of exercise and temperance say to this?"

For the Reverend Mr. Davis "for the last thirty years never used any other exercise than that of slipping his feet one before the other from room to room." That, one feels, is enough to class him with the remarkable characters, of which there are so many in the book that this also seems to be a necessity for nonagenarianism. An Honourable Mrs. Watkins, for instance, when she was 109, came from Glamorgan to London, saw Mrs. Siddons act nine times, climbed up to the Whispering Gallery, and then returned "with no particular precautions" to Glamorgan. She was beaten, however, by one Mary Wilkinson. This lady, at the age of ninety, buckled a keg of gin on her back and walked 290 miles to London in five days, which was, says the author, "an instance of vigorous age not to be equalled by the boasting pedestrians of the present day." A year later, Mr. Easton came on a man who was sold with an estate, it being stipulated that he should be kept for life. His life continuing rather longer than those who made the bargain had thought, prompts reflections on the revenge of Time's roundabout. These are in turn gainsaid by the sad fate, in 1794, of Richard Brown, who retired on a competence which, "his life being longer than he expected," he outlived. These are but freaks of fate, owing nothing of their remarkableness to personality, as did Adam Walker, dying in 1799. He was only 90, but he deserves chronicling as a character because he invented "that beautiful machine, the eidouranium or transparent orrery, and the celestium; the oil stove under the House of Lords, and pit of the Italian Opera House; the present mail coach with upright wheels, and the great revolving lights at Scilly, Cromer, etc." Though short, his was clearly a life of useful, if contrasted, activity. Yet his inventions must not be allowed to dim the domestic diligence of Anne Thomas. She "knitted a

pair of neat ribbed stockings with great judgment few days before her dissolution," which is none the less eccentric for being exemplary.

Other ladies who found their own way of being remembered were Margaret Coles, of St. Giles', who left, at 102, ten pounds, all in half-pennies, and Mrs. Leavefield, by bequeathing all her large fortune to a common soldier unknown to her but bearing the same name. Other personages attained remark by sheer persistence. The Reverend Mr. Braithwaite, of 1784, was in Carlisle Cathedral for a century, and Major Wilkins, two years later, adjusted that balance by having spent half of his hundred years in prison for debt in York Castle. Sadder than these was Martha Gillet, whom some whim of fate preserved for the same span, although "being totally deprived of sight, she was obliged to take refuge in the workhouse, where she was esteemed till life may be said to have fallen asleep in the arms of death." At least she moved Mr. Easton to a touching epitaph. But there are many instances of what the manner of his time enabled him, who was no author, to call "examples of longevity existing in a state of great bodily imperfection." One woman was stolen when young by gipsies, who "among other acts of barbarity, put out her eyes, to move compassion," and when one reads of Sarah Sherdley, centenarian and an idiot from birth, it seems that Life, in wayward belated compensation for physical ill, has specially prolonged their span, nor considered their suffering lasted the longer thereby. Gloomiest of unfortunates must have been John Tice. He died in 1774, at the age of 125. When he was 80, "he had the misfortune to have both his legs broken by the falling of a tree and, a violent cold afterwards settling in his head, rendered him very deaf." His troubles were not yet over. "At the age of 100, whilst sitting by the fireside alone, he fell into the fire and, being a cripple, could not extricate himself; but a person accidentally coming into the room, preserved him from death, though he was much burnt." However, "the greatest misfortune which could have befallen him and which he did not long survive, was the death of his only friend Lord Lyttleton. After that he never left his room." If ever a man was marked for death, surely here was one!—but he cheated it, to be left with 'only' one friend. In the case of John Tice, there can be no question—it was not worth it.

But, as usual, there is a record which redresses. It comes now in the person of John Minet. Thirty years before he died at 112, he sold his hair for a penny loaf a day for the rest of his life, and though more than twenty wigs were made from the hair of this remarkable personage, it requires but crude mathematics to see that the baker was out to the tune of over ten thousand loaves. Another gay instance of oddity is that of James Peace of 1783 and 105 years old. He worked for a farmer Pope, who had a goose 86 years old. Both Peace and the goose died together.

Four more worthies claim mention before the book must be closed. One is the strange gentleman of Mansfield workhouse, Sussex, of whom "it is not unworthy of remark that at the age of 82, with as much resolution as rashness, he cut off his right hand." The second, Mr. Hastings of

Woodlands, Dorset, I find so singular that I can only expect to be believed by quoting James Easton's own words. "The walls of his house were covered with the skins of foxes and polecats. His old green hats were full of pheasants' eggs and litters of young cats. Tables, dice, cards and books were not wanting. The pulpit in the chapel was well-stocked with gammons of bacon, roast beef, venison-pasties and large apple pies. He dived into the secrets of the majority of the maids, wives and widows of his neighbourhood. He drank only one pint of small beer stirred with rosemary and one or two glasses of syrup of gilliflowers. He ate oysters twice a day throughout the year." After this heresy, I should perhaps close. But Mr. Hastings seems to have had a life so worth living, even to his extent, that one feels he did not return, as did Mary Cameron, exclaiming, "Let me now die in peace; I want to see no more in this world," and one is tempted to search, among these pupils of Paracelsus, for patriarchs no less picturesque.

The Venetian John Riva comes near, for "he always chewed citron bark and had a child after he was a hundred." Indeed several did, and several of these offspring were born with grey hair and never had teeth, while other long-livers put on new hair and new teeth as they drew near their limit. From this it may be gauged that life is indeed a process of change, and that senility handing us to what we were, begins the process before we are dead, the better for dust to be assimilated, the sooner, maybe, for roses to rise from remains.

But all gauging is hazardous; there is so little opinion offered by any of these aged as to what they experienced. One wonders what kind of people they were. They had often fine-sounding names—Don Lewis d'Acusha, Zachary Abington, Marie Magdaleine, of Brack France, Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle and Delina Filkins, deceased 1928. But names give no indication as to whether these, for whom Time may be said to have stood still, felt cheated of Eternity, and one wonders if the sum of energy were merely spread out, which in us is more concentrate, or whether, conversely, unusual energy carried them on. It is astonishing of how many people the author has nothing to say. There is Susannah Reynolds "of Pentonville," not even called, as was Mrs. Malton, a maiden lady. There is sadness in the thought that one can live as long as Sir Fleetwood Shephard, only to be remembered as "the particular friend of Mr. Prior, the poet . . ." or, as will happen to me, if Fate spares or spites me, to be plain Mr. Jones, 108, "of" Fleet Street. When one examines more closely the entries, to find Henrietta Long, 121, of Hoxton, who "formerly sold grey peas in the streets," or Mrs. Alchome, of Drury Lane, "formerly shown about as the strong woman"—which she had plenty of time to live down—it seems that the lives that were so lengthened were not very alert. It is true that Thomas Kasbruck wove in Moravia till he was 104 and Dorothy Clark at 102 reaped wheat against a man all day—with what success is not stated—but these activities, so soon followed by decease, seem to be allied to the case of Joan Godfrey "carrying a bucket of water a great distance within a week

of her death," between which two events no one seems to have seen the connection.

What Mr. Easton does find worth noting, with a frequency which tells its own tale, is that Elizabeth Jones of Ludlow "always had her understanding perfect," and that Mrs. Pimm, dying at 104 in 1740, passed "without any seeming impair of her faculties." On the whole, indeed, among these two thousand centenarians, there are strangely few who were distinguished for more than the length of their lives, and increase of life does not often seem to have meant increase of usefulness. One looks in vain for any evidence, that the years of labour being over, leisure for the last thirty was devoted to profitable study; to easing the lot of others less fortunate in estate, with presumably less time for a turn of fortune; to anything, in short, that one might have expected them to have promised themselves. It may be that minds tire before the body breaks. It may be there are compensations hard to communicate and it may be that the last thirty years are a haze of hankering after joys weakly remembered but refusing to be forgotten. It may be it is not worth it. Not one of them says. But there is Poor Joe All Alone, and the name holds a fright. When our one consolation for the shortness of love is the brevity of life after it, there is something searing in the thought of a life dragged out beyond even the memory of friends, and few, I fancy, would have the heart to follow William Ivens who, because "as he said, he was resolved to die virtuous," married his fourth wife, a few years before he died, when 111. Two hands alone, from those I have quoted and the more I have not, beckon encouragement in this hobby of making hay out of strength but as grass. William Marshall reaches back, at the end of 117 years, with the hope he may live twenty years more, and Alexander Dickin, a mere 101, boasted that he had never had a sore head or a sick heart. There is comfort in that, even though it means that he missed both most things and their aftermath. But happiness like health is a habit: the most one can say of longevity is that it appears to be a profession.

CORRESPONDENCE

(To the Editor of THE LONDON MERCURY)

SIR,—I trust that neither your readers, nor Sir David Hunter Blair, will think me discourteous when I say that Sir David's memory betrayed him, and betrayed him grossly, when he wrote the article "More Light on Baron Corvo," which appeared in your May issue. It is a very interesting, but also a very inaccurate, article; and, as I shall hope to show, Sir David does me less than justice in his cavils against my book *The Quest for Corvo*.

In the first place, Sir David says that he calls my researches "more or less" exhaustive, for the reason that though I "appear" to have "culled evidence from many out-of-the-way quarters," yet "it so happens" that I never asked *him* to supply me with any details of his relations with Frederick William Rolfe, the subject of my book and of his article. "Possibly," says Sir David, "Mr. Symons knew nothing of them."

The answer to this is that I *did* know of Sir David's relations with Fr. Rolfe, Baron Corvo, and that I *did* ask him to supply me with details of those relations. What Sir David's answer was, will appear in the further course of my reply.

Secondly: Sir David speaks of Rolfe's friendship with the Rev. George Angus, and of his relation to "that other faithful friend among the Catholic clergy thinly disguised as 'Francis Talacryn Bishop of Caerleon'" as evidence of a side of Rolfe's nature which I have insufficiently displayed in my book. "He (*i.e.*, Rolfe) never turned upon Angus and stung him as he did so many of those who helped and befriended him," says Sir David, with characteristic forgetfulness. Of these two (Angus and Caerleon) it is asserted that "Rolfe, both in his private capacity and as the legendary Pope, had never anything but good to say." "Is not all this," continues Sir David, "to be counted to Rolfe's credit? Yet I can find in the 300 pages of the *Quest* no single reference to it, or to either of these two friends (unique in enjoying Rolfe's unbroken regard) excepting one . . . passage . . ."

The truth of this matter can most easily be established in Sir David's own words. I have already said that, despite my critic's printed assertion to the contrary, I did consult him when writing my book. To be precise, I wrote to him on Nov. 4th, 1926, and received the following answer, dated six days later:

The Abbey,
Fort Augustus,
Scotland.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 4th, I regret to say that it is quite impossible for me to answer the questions you put to me regarding my relations with the late Mr. F. Rolfe.

The subject is a most painful one to me. He is gone now, and I bear him no malice. But the recollection of the incredible ingratitude and malevolence with which he treated those who had tried to be kind to him is one which I do not like to recall. You, of course, have no idea of what we (I include my dear friends the late Mgr. R. H. Benson and the Rev. George Angus and H. R. Grissell) suffered at his hands. I had hoped it might all be forgotten now.

Of course I cannot dictate to you what you should or should not print about him. I can only express my *earnest wish*, which I trust you will respect, that there may be *no allusion whatever* to me in your forthcoming article or book about Mr. Rolfe.

May I have a line from you reassuring me on this point?

Yours sincerely,

✠ D. O. HUNTER BLAIR,

O.S.B. Abbot.

It will be seen that this letter not only disposes of Sir David's criticism that I did not consult him, but also of his claim that the Rev. George Angus was one of two friends who were "unique in enjoying Rolfe's unbroken regard." So much for Angus. I turn to "Talachryn," whose identity I will not disclose, though there is no particular reason for concealing it. "Talachryn" is now an archbishop. In the late 'nineties, he was Bishop of the diocese in which Rolfe at that time lived; and Rolfe, who as the result of his Holywell dispute regarded himself as improperly excommunicated, regarded "Talachryn" as a party to the plot against his peace, and sought to denounce him to his superiors. Subsequently, it is true, Rolfe revised his view of "Talachryn," but the feeling of the latter as to his relations with the author of *Hadrian the Seventh* is shown in the following letter:

Archbishop's House,

My dear Mr. Symons,

My acquaintance with Mr. Frederick Rolfe was mostly in connection with the sad episode at Holywell, and as the poor man is now dead, I prefer to say nothing about him. "De mortuis nil nisi bonum."

Believe me

Yours very faithfully in Xt

In other words, since "Talachryn" could say little good of Rolfe, he would say no evil.

Third: Sir David says that his "final criticism" of *The Quest* "has to do with a paragraph (on p. 33) relating to the year 1892, when Rolfe held a tutorship to Malcolm Hay of Seaton and his brother at their home near Aberdeen. The references in the paragraph are spiteful throughout, ending with a story of Rolfe's practical expulsion from Seaton House, an episode of which the laird, Major Malcolm Hay, now a well-known historical writer, has no recollection whatever."

Who could gather from this that the "spiteful" paragraph on p. 33 is *quoted* by me from a contemporary newspaper account, which I stigmatize more than once as an unfair attack, or that Major Hay's letter of reminiscence, to which I shall refer, does *not* say that he has "no recollection whatever" of the alleged expulsion? Sir David's method of presenting his point is as much at fault here as his memory elsewhere.

Fourth: Sir David continues "Major Hay has told me that in answer to a letter from the author of *The Quest* asking for information as to the Seaton days, he wrote him at length, saying that he and his brother (who were then young boys) had nothing but the pleasantest memories of their tutor, who was as kind as possible to them both, and in every way a delightful companion. Why is this tribute altogether suppressed in Mr. Symons' book. Can it be because it was too entirely favourable to the subject of his biography? It looks rather like it."

What Sir David says here is not true, and he has either been misinformed, or his memory has once more played him a trick. Major Hay did not write me "at length." He sent me a note of twenty lines, several of which are merely negative expressions of regret. The rest gave me no new facts or impressions, and consequently I did not print the letter, which was as follows:

Seaton House,
Aberdeen.

Dear Sir,

I regret that I can tell you very little about Rolfe. He came here as tutor during the summer holidays—I do not remember the year but it must have been about 1892. I do not think he left Seaton "under a cloud." But I heard that he incurred debts in Aberdeen which he was unable to meet. I cannot tell you anything about how he came to be chosen as tutor. I have no letters of his. On a tree in the grounds he carved skilfully a chalice and his initials, still clearly visible. All my personal recollection of him is very favourable, he was amusing, original, fluent. He told us that an Italian Countess or Marchioness was his

adopted grandmother. He had a vivid imagination ; was always about to do something wonderful or to make some marvellous discovery. Very fond of photography ; he had the makings of a really first class artist. He had no conscience about money ; yet was not dishonest. He often failed to tell the truth ; yet never lied. He used to tell amazing yarns about his life in Rome, yarns which even to a boy of twelve were obviously incredible.

I am sorry I can give you so little information.

Yours faithfully,
M. HAY.

And this is the tribute which Sir David Hunter Blair suggests that I "suppressed" because "it was too entirely favourable" to the subject of my biography. Why, may I ask him, does he uncharitably suppose that I should even consider "suppressing" anything that told in poor Rolfe's favour?

Fifth : So far I have dealt with Sir David's criticisms of myself and my book. It is now my turn to become accuser. I retort to him the charge of suppressing material that might have told to Rolfe's credit. In his article Sir David gives an account of Rolfe's reconciliation with himself, and repentance, as expressed in a letter which he still possesses and quotes from. Yet, in 1926, when acknowledging the promise that he had asked for, that I would not even mention him in connection with the malevolent Rolfe, he wrote :

The Abbey,
Fort Augustus,
Scotland.
Nov. 14, 1926.

Dear Sir,

I am much obliged by your letter, and by your promise (which I feel sure you will scrupulously observe) to make no mention of me in anything you may write about F. Rolfe.

I regret that I have no papers whatever about him, and therefore can send you nothing. I burned all his letters to me some time ago, and tried to forget that he had ever written them.

Yours faithfully,
✠ DAVID O. HUNTER BLAIR,
O.S.B.Abb.

Why did he tell me nothing of the repentance of the erring but contrite author, who asked his pardon for "my pride and obstinacy, and for every single unchristian thought, word, or deed which I have had or done about you," and concluded "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned"? Paraphrasing Sir David, let me ask "Why was this tribute suppressed in Sir David's letter to me? Can it have been because it was too entirely favourable to the subject of my biography?" In Sir David's own words "It looks very like it."

And, Sir, lest it may seem to your indulgent readers that Sir David's remarkable and erratic memory is an excuse for his culpable forgetfulness, let me quote the last words of his article concerning the unfortunate Rolfe: "I have never ceased to remember him and commend him to God's mercy." Why, then, was he so careful not to commend him to mine? He had the chance; and spoke only of "incredible ingratitude," of "malevolence," of letters that he had burned and preferred to forget, of his earnest wish not even to be mentioned in the same book as the repentant sinner. But concerning the repentance of the man he had never ceased to remember, yet wished to forget, he was silent. Why was he silent?

Yours, etc.,
A. J. A. SYMONS.

Brick House,
Finchingfield,
Essex.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES & NEWS

Correspondence from readers on all subjects of bibliographical interest is invited. Our Correspondent will, to the best of his ability, answer all queries addressed to him.

GENERAL NOTES

IT is very seldom that a matter of bibliography succeeds in attracting the attention of the general public—or even of the literary public as a whole. There appeared, however, on the second of July, a book of which the approach had been whispered about for many months, and which was startling enough to interest even the popular Press. I refer to *An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets*, by Messrs. John Carter and Graham Pollard (Constable, 15s.), which was greeted with columns not only in *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*, but also in the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Herald*. The last-named journal went so far as to display its account of the book on the front page, and to send a reporter to Hastings to interview Mr. T. J. Wise (and to what he said I will revert later in this notice). Never before, I feel sure, has a bibliographical investigation created such a hubbub and received so much publicity from persons having, as a rule, only the slightest interest in literary matters. What is more to our point, in these particular pages of THE LONDON MERCURY, is that Messrs. Carter and Pollard, in the course of their enquiries, employed a technique which was, I think, in part quite new, and was in other parts at least carried out with a most uncommon degree of ingenuity.



THE tale begins with Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets*, a pamphlet printed, so itself would inform us, at Reading in 1847, and containing the famous poems which, as *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, made a public appearance in the author's collected *Poems* of 1850. The supposed story of this book was first told in 1894 by Sir (then Mr.) Edmund Gosse, in an introduction to an edition of the *Sonnets*, and was repeated by him two years later in his *Critical Kit-Kats*. According to Sir Edmund, Browning had told "a friend" that, early in 1847, Mrs. Browning had given him the manuscript of the *Sonnets* to read. She was unwilling to have them printed at first, but, urged by her husband, eventually sent them to Mary Russell Miltord, who arranged for the private printing of the Reading edition. One can guess that "the friend" may have been Gosse himself, who says that the story was printed with Browning's authority. As it is quite impossible for anyone who knew Gosse to associate him with anything underhand, it seems clear that what Browning told him (unless indeed there *was* a "friend" other than Gosse) must have been only half the story—that part, that is, which relates to Mrs. Browning giving the manuscript to her husband. Supposing Gosse to have been shown a copy of the Reading *Sonnets* he would very naturally fit the book into what would have been its natural place in the story had it, in fact, been what it seemed. This any writer would probably have done, without necessarily saying "At this point Browning's authority for the story ceases"; and a reading of what Sir Edmund Gosse wrote shows that it breaks very naturally into two parts—that relating to the manuscript and that relating to the Reading edition. The former, incidentally, is six times as long as the latter, which adds force to my supposition that what Gosse said about the Reading *Sonnets* of 1847 may well have been an

addition to his narrative, drawn from a different source (*i.e.*, not from Browning). This point, as I ought perhaps to make clear, is my own, but it arises quite naturally out of the account, and the quotations, given by Messrs. Carter and Pollard. It is the respect and gratitude I bear towards Gosse's memory that makes me stress the point—for, unfortunately, all is not well with the *Sonnets* of 1847.

TO return, then, to the main argument. For some years there has been a vague rumour that Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets*, Reading, 1847, was perhaps not quite what it should be. It was very curious that there was no reference to it until more than forty years after it was supposed to have been printed. It was also very curious that no presentation copy, and no copy with any indication of having belonged to either of the Brownings, ever turned up. So our authors decided to look into the matter, and in doing so they had their attention attracted to a number of other pamphlets, mostly of the privately printed, pre-publication type, by a number of eminent writers, including the Brownings, Tennyson, William Morris, Swinburne, Thackeray, Dickens, Stevenson and Wordsworth. There were even two by Mr. Kipling, which appear to be the latest of the group. In all fifty-one pamphlets aroused powerful suspicion in the authors' minds, and were subjected to certain tests, both positive and negative. The cumulative effect of the negative tests—absence of author's inscriptions; absence of contemporary references, and the like—is very great, but it does not amount to absolute proof. But by three positive tests, paper, type and text, no less than thirty-one pamphlets are irrefutably (as it seems to me) demonstrated to be forgeries—not that the matter they contain is not by the authors to whom it is attributed, the pieces are all genuine in that sense, but that they were not printed at the time or place, or in the circumstances, to which they pretend to belong.

THE paper test has a beautiful simplicity. The authors, after some research, discovered that before 1861 all paper used in printing books was made only of rag. From 1861 esparto grass became a possible material, and from 1874 "chemical wood pulp" also became possible—though it was not a likely component until 1883. Add to this the fact that it is possible, by expert microscopic examination, to ascertain of what material any piece of paper is made, and we see that a very useful weapon is ready for bibliographical investigation. It is to the authors' great credit that (I believe for the first time, at any rate on any large scale) they availed themselves of this weapon as a means of testing the supposed dates of the pamphlets they were examining. The results were illuminating. The experts employed (Messrs. Cross and Bevan) reported that ten pamphlets dated before 1861 contained esparto in their paper, and that thirteen dated before 1874 contained chemical wood. Tennyson's *Morte D'Arthur*, dated 1842, contained both esparto and chemical wood; Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets*, 1842, contained chemical wood and rag; Thackeray's *An Interesting Event*, 1849, was an interesting event indeed, since it was printed on esparto paper a full twelve years before the introduction of that material; and so on. In all twenty-two suspected pamphlets fell before the paper test and were proved to be out-and-out forgeries.

NEXT came the typographical test. The *Sonnets* of 1847 were noticed to be in a type having three peculiarities—a kernless lower-case f and j, and an extremely unusual question-mark. Imagine the excitement when it was discovered

that this type was never used in any printing office but one—that of the famous firm of Clay—and only there between the years 1883 and 1893. By this test, too, Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets*, 1847, was a fake, and so was Tennyson's *Morte D'Arthur*, 1842, and so was Tennyson's *Lucretius*, supposedly printed at Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1868. Altogether sixteen of the suspected pamphlets, ranging in date from 1842 to 1873, were in this fount of type and therefore forgeries. What is more, the whole of the remaining pamphlets were printed in types which Messrs. Clay possessed—a suggestive fact, even though other firms may also have had them.

A FEW of the pamphlets also succumbed to textual tests—indeed Messrs. Cook and Wedderburn had already in 1903 denounced two Ruskin pamphlets as forgeries upon textual grounds. This, however, had escaped general notice, being buried in the small-type notes to a 39-volume edition, so effectively that even the bibliographer of Ruskin, Mr. Wise, was not aware of it. What a lesson for editors and annotators upon a large scale! Space, however, prevents me from going into the details of these cases.

WHO was the forger? This is a question which Messrs. Carter and Pollard have been unable to solve. When some of the pamphlets were proved definitely to have been printed by Messrs. Clay, there were great hopes that the name of the person who placed the order might be discoverable. But unhappily all records before 1911 have been destroyed—and there is (or so I gather) no one who can remember the transactions, which would not be specially memorable since the firm was much employed for making perfectly legitimate facsimiles of various kinds. The person who seems most likely to be able to discover the identity of the forger is Mr. T. J. Wise, for a very large number of the forged pamphlets are said to be either now in his collection or to have passed through his hands at one time or another. And though it is easy enough to understand how it comes that he did not suspect the fraud, one cannot help regretting that it was so, since by his great authority as a collector and bibliographer he has unwittingly helped these fraudulent productions to become established in the world. Mr. Wise, I believe, has recently been seriously ill, and perhaps for that reason was not able to give the authors of this enquiry information upon this point. But on June 30th (two days before the publication of the book, but after an article about it had appeared in *The Times*) the *Daily Herald* published an interview with him. According to that interview Mr. Wise expressed the view that many of the books (but not all) are genuine, and stated that he obtained them from H. Buxton Forman. "They were planted on Forman and not on me," said Mr. Wise, and later on, "my own opinion is that the things that are really wrong were produced by Richard Herne Shepherd." Now Shepherd is one of the possible forgers considered by Mr. Carter and Mr. Pollard, and they come to the conclusion that it is improbable that he was responsible. Indeed, he was dead before the two Kipling forgeries, or piracies (which, admittedly, are upon rather a different footing to the rest) were printed. This book was not published when Mr. Wise was interviewed. One wonders whether he had had an opportunity of reading it, and, if not, whether he still considers Shepherd a likely candidate for the villain's part.

I. A. WILLIAMS



BOOK-PRODUCTION NOTES

SOME EARLY VENETIAN WOODCUT BOOKS

EVERY student of book-production knows the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, printed by Aldus at Venice in 1499; for a specimen of its admirable woodcuts is shown in every history of book-illustration. Of late years also it has become known by name to every monotype-user by reason of the very successful reproduction of its type which has been cut by the Monotype Corporation under Mr. Stanley Morison's guidance. The *Poliphilus* has very rightly been regarded as presenting the Venetian woodcutter's art in its high perfection. To those of us who are letterpress printers, its woodcuts are likely to rank as supreme examples of the kind of illustration which is suited above all other for the printed book, so absolute is their fitness and so complete their harmony with the type pages of which they form an integral and beautiful part. It has only lately been my good fortune to become acquainted with three other Venetian illustrated books whose woodcuts seem to come from the same workshop as those of the *Hypnerotomachia*. The earliest of the three in date is the Malermi Bible, printed in 1490 by Ragazzo for Lucantonio Giunta. A copy is on permanent exhibition in the King's Library at the British Museum in the same case as the *Poliphilus*. There are upwards of 400 little woodcuts in this Bible, and the letter b with which some of them are signed in either book is held by some to indicate the workshop in which they were cut. In Boccaccio's *Decameron*, printed by the brothers De Gregorii in 1492, there are more than a hundred small woodcuts, including one for each of the tales told; and it is plain that these too come from the



Woodcut from the *Livy*, printed at Venice, 1493



Wood-engraving by R. J. Beedham after a woodcut in the *Decameron*, Venice, 1492

same workshop, for they agree in size and character with those of the Malermi Bible, and many of them have the signature "b." There is a magnificent frontispiece to the book, and each "Day" opens with a large double-column block, representing the "Queen" or "King" who is to preside for the day, surrounded by the gentlewomen and youths who are gathered to listen to the Tales. The Bodleian has a copy of the book, and there is one at the John Rylands Library; but that at the British Museum is a later reprint dated 1498, and does not contain the woodcut shown at the head of these notes, which is used in the original edition for seven out of the ten Days. In the reprint some of the other woodcuts also are wanting, and many of them are worn, suggesting that so popular a book was reprinted again and again. Then, in 1493, Johannes Rubeus printed for Giunta a magnificent *Livy*, containing three large and more than 420 small woodcuts. The small pictures are of the same size and character as those of the Bible and the *Decameron*. Some of them are signed b, others G, and others F. How near akin they are in the two books may be judged from the reproduction of one of the *Livy* woodcuts shown here just above the picture for Boccaccio's Fifth Tale of the Third Day. This has been

engraved in facsimile (the size very slightly reduced) with marvellous faithfulness and complete success by Mr. R. J. Beedham, who has also engraved the large subject here printed. The entire series is to be engraved for the Boccaccio which is now printing at the Shakespeare Head Press. The *Livy* cut is a photographic reproduction taken from a copy lately in the possession of Messrs. E. P. Goldschmidt & Co., the Bond Street booksellers, who have kindly lent the block.

B. H. NEWDIGATE

CHRONICLES

THE TALKIES

DIE CANAILLE. LITWAK. Garten Kino, Vienna.

PÊCHEUR D'ISLANDE. GUERLAIS. Beacon. Academy.

THE HOUSE OF ROTHSCHILD. WERKER. Twentieth Century. Tivoli.

SPITFIRE. CROMWELL. Radio. Plaza.

THE SCARLET EMPRESS. VON STERNBERG. Paramount. Carlton.

WINGS OVER EVEREST. BARKAS-MONTAGU. Gaumont-British. Curzon.

FOLLOWING a French talkie which had German sub-titles, so diversely occupied my attention that I failed to notice the producing company of *Die Canaille*. But as I missed *The Thin Man*, *Twentieth Century* and *Black Magic* in London, I feel I must offer as justification that I saw a new French film in Vienna. *Little Women* had taken first prize at the film-festival there. Other kinos were showing *The Wandering Jew*, Ronald Colman's very first talkie, Garbo speaking German in *Mata Hari*, and musicals with Anny Ondra and Dolly Haas. . . . *Die Canaille* was the newest there was. It is no masterpiece, but it is an interesting film for Litwak to have made, being serious, sometimes sad, often sordid ; in a word, what many people would mean were they to call it a "psychological drama." There would have been more opportunity for psychology had the drama been less superficial, but Litwak managed to show a certain perception for character. The story tells of the interest of an elderly man (Harry Bauer) in a girl (Alice Field) at a fun-fair. She thus becomes a lady (in a way that shows she knows her Joan Crawford), but remains true to her lover, who is an acrobat. She even returns to him, and travels round with the circus. The life scarcely suits her, and when she is not quite sure how she feels, she meets her protector again. This naturally causes her husband to fall off his trapeze, and the protector, being a surgeon, is called on to save the life of the man for the woman he himself loves. He does this, which gives the film a conclusion that may be satisfying, but is hardly surprising. No film containing an acrobat can be surprising, for we know he will fall from his trapeze.

I should have liked to have seen Litwak, who directed the gay *Tell Me To-Night*, make a film in which acrobats were as happy as the day is long, and the Big Top high. Their wives should be faithful, and they would swing and somersault out of sheer exuberance at this fact. All their tricks would be successful, and all the acrobats in the world would pass a vote of thanks on such a unique film. For, of course, their profession is grossly maligned by the screen. No acrobat is allowed to be consistently good at his job. Sooner or later he falls. Sometimes it is when the net underneath is taken away, sometimes when his wife walks in with one of those other men. Usually, both these things happen together, which is meant to heighten suspense. It doesn't. There has been none. The minute we see an acrobat, we know he is fated to fall . . . and always from his trapeze, the one thing he should know how to handle. He may buy new shoes—he will never slip in them. He may, at the height of success, drive a car without learning—his smashes are few. But the minute he attempts to perform, he

will perish. Several years of studying the screen in the public service have led me to the conclusion that the only way in which acrobats can survive is to tie creepers round their trapeze and traipse after Tarzan, disguised as monkeys.

Breton fishermen are similarly unfortunate. They have to be drowned. Of course, if as many Bretons were drowned as the films make out, there would be none left to photograph in so many films. But the directors don't care. They see a strong young Breton, and they say "He'll do nicely for drowning." They marry him first, just to add poignancy. The bride sits at home and the storm, which has been waiting for this, pounces with glee on the poor little smack. Follows business with lamp, check curtains in gale, watchers on skyline, bride donning black veil and procession to church. The masterpiece—Breton films are always masterpieces—ends with words to the effect that a fisherman cannot wed both the sea and a maid. All this and more we have in *Pêcheur d'Islande*. The more chiefly consists of Yvette Guilbert. Though she suffers, like everyone else in the film, from wooden direction, she manages to add one more triumph to her career. As the old grandmother to whom age brings the loss of all but her own life, Mme. Guilbert astonishes by her expressiveness and economy.

Diction teaches repose, and these artists of an earlier age understood diction. That is why Mrs. Patrick Campbell in *Riptide* could give point to lines that had none, whilst Norma Shearer always seemed to be wondering what had happened to the point of hers. Adele Sandrock spoke her pacifist lines in *Morgenrot* so well that one almost forgot to wonder if they were put in for foreign markets only; she is as telling in *Kleines Madel*, *Grosses Glück*, also in Vienna. Helen Westley in *The House of Rothschild* is so quietly forceful that even Mr. Arliss forbears to patronize her. This picture is advertised in American papers in these terms: "His heart bled for the shattered romance of his lovely daughter. To rebuild it he matched his wits against the brains and power of Europe and pulled down from heaven the star of Napoleon's destiny." *The House of Rothschild* is not quite that kind of picture. But neither is it quite what it sounds. It follows the career of the one of the five men of Frankfort, who is played by Mr. Arliss. We really see only the rise of the London house of Rothschild.

We do not see very much of that, owing to devices whereby most of the action is disposed of in sub-titles. This leaves the footage free for Mr. Arliss to make speeches of high moral content. The morals are so impeccable that I find it a pity that the star's dignity prevents him from making a film of Queen Victoria; he would say, "I will be good" with such studied fervour. It is goodness, more than greatness, which he can display, and his Nathan Rothschild is, in consequence, a man whose career seems to owe more to circumstance than to character. Thus the picture, though wholehearted in its propaganda, is thoughtful but not inspired.

The same is true of *Spitfire*. But in this film it is character more than action that counts, and whatever her faults as an actress, Katharine Hepburn is one of the few film-stars whose creations have character. It is true that this part, like all her parts, is too patently made to measure. She is called on to be hurt, haughty and hoydenish and little else. She is hurt rather more than usual, because we must be prepared for her as *Joan of Arc*, but she manages to make us forget this, because she gives us a picture of a girl gradually learning to correlate her energies and emotions. Some of her movements are still too deliberate, but her performance as a whole has a new ripeness and tenderness.

There is naturally nothing new about Dietrich, and there is only one way to look at von Sternberg, if one has to; that is to remember that he is a satirist. *Morocco*, *Dishonoured* and *Shanghai Express* were all satires on their respective kinds of film, and *The Scarlet Empress*, if it is not the childish scribbling of a voyeur, is a scathing

comment on Hollywood's approach to history. Particularly, I think, if one has seen Marion Davies' imitation of Joan Crawford in *Spy* 13, will one enjoy the fluffiness of Dietrich's Catherine. Sternberg's sculptures lack taste—so do Hollywood's sets. Like them, these plasticine gargoyles dwarf the actors, hiding the fact that they can't act. Hollywood alters history, and Sternberg replies by turning Catherine, at the moment of her greatness as Empress of all the Russias, into Queen of the Moulin Rouge as well, complete with Hussar hat and Hessians. If he hasn't meant to do these things, then *The Scarlet Empress* is the world's most vulgar film. As it is almost the world's most tedious, I am not quite sure what he has done.

An attempt has been made to make *Wings Over Everest* something more than a photographic record of a great flight. In the main it is successful. Certainly it was time that someone realized it is such subjects, and not musical-comedy plots, which demand the full attention of studios. Some of the reconstruction is not quite convincing, but on the other hand Lady Houston herself appears, and is extremely convincing. Sitting in bed, wearing a boudoir cap and toying with a rose, she makes quite clear that she will finance the flight so that the Indians will know Englishmen are not yet all those things which she is so afraid others think they are. The flight then proceeds, as the reports say, according to plan. Naturally, some attempt has been made to dramatize what might be more dramatic if left to speak for itself; equally naturally, the famous British casualness rather self-consciously emphasizes the scale of the undertaking. Whenever it becomes real, someone will be awfully jolly and diffident, and one has the feeling that the old school colours are having the best airing of their lives. But that is all part of the spirit which does fly over Everest, and it is perhaps not noticeably overdone. What is noticeable is that, magnificent as the shots are, the film as a whole is not as exciting as previous Everest films. They were less spectacular, but took us more into the ardours of the adventure, bringing us slowly but closely every step of the way. But this is a fine British film, and it is a pity that it is not going to be shown at the International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art being held in Venice during the first three weeks of August.

The British films which are being shown include *Contact*, *Man of Arran*, *The Private Life of Don Juan* and *Blossom Time*, which is one of those productions in which Tauber looks like a Schubert, who sings like Tauber. The American section includes *It Happened One Night*, *Little Women*, and (rather surprisingly) *The Invisible Man*, *White Heat*, *Death Takes a Holiday*, *Wonder Bar*, *Viva Villa*, and Constance Bennett in *The Affairs of Cellini*. Films will also be shown from Austria, Holland, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia, India, Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland, and they will all be seen, at the Hotel Excelsior, in their original versions.

ROBERT HERRING

FICTION—I

- EROS IN PARIS. By JULES ROMAINS. Lovat Dickson. 7s. 6d.
 HARVEST IN THE NORTH. By J. L. HODSON. Gollancz. 7s. 6d.
 HELL ! SAID THE DUCHESS. By MICHAEL ARLEN. Heinemann. 6s.
 ANN AND AURELIA. By ADRIAN ALINGTON. Chatto and Windus. 7s. 6d.
 EVENING OF A MARTINET. By JANE OLIVER. Collins. 7s. 6d.
 PELICAN WALKING. By G. B. STERN. Heinemann. 7s. 6d.
 RUMOUR OF HEAVEN. By BEATRIX LEHMANN. Methuen. 7s. 6d.

IT is very easy to disparage M. Romains' *Men of Good Will* ; to say that a work "obedient to the unexpectedness, the incongruity, the very disconnectedness of life" cannot be a work of art, since the business of the artist is to connect, to make congruous, to unite. It is easy to shrug your shoulders and call it good journalism. But it is difficult to find another recent series of novels, connected or disconnected, by any one author, so continually and variously interesting, stimulating and amusing. Of course, it is possible to discover murder stories more exciting and more swift than that of Quinette, love stories more simple and passionate even than that of Jallez and Hélène Sigeau, descriptions of dogs more and less anthropomorphic than that of Macaire touring the lamp-posts. It is possible to find in other novels passages of greater "beauty," more intense feeling, more lively drama, more ingenious construction, more subtle analysis than any in the volumes of *Men of Good Will* which have yet appeared. But—and for safety I must make this qualification personal—I would rather read the whole of *Men of Good Will*, however long M. Romains decides to make it, twice, than any six of the other novels I have read in the past year which number about a hundred. This is not a fit of mad enthusiasm. I am not madly enthusiastic about M. Romains' work or his "idea." I am even prepared to be convinced, by arguments similar to that suggested at the beginning of this chronicle, that it is a silly idea. Yet I repeat in cold blood and without hysteria my preference. There must be some reason for it, and the only reason I can find at the moment is the quality of intelligence. This is not merely to say that M. Romains is intelligent and that Miss Snoop and Mr. Yellowwrap, who wrote those Book Society Choices, are not. It means rather that M. Romains applies his intellect unflaggingly to his material and his work, and that they do not. No doubt he regards this application of intellect as a pleasure rather than a duty ; but it serves nevertheless to remind other novelists that it is part of their duty, even if they do not find it a pleasure, to use what intellect they have. Most novelists seem to suppose, if they will allow us to judge them from their work, that as long as they report more or less accurately the kind of life which they know, they have done all that can reasonably be required of them. They seem almost to regard the writing of novels as an excellent excuse for nit-wittedness. I have even heard a young novelist say that the great advantage of writing novels as opposed to other sorts of book, or as opposed to being a politician, a schoolmaster or an engineer was that you did not have to think ! The public is, perhaps, largely to blame for this error. Certainly books written on this hypothesis sell in their thousands. But they grow duller month by month, and the public is beginning to notice it.

Statistics from the libraries, the bookshops and the publishers show that there is a marked decrease of interest in fiction. If this decrease of interest is not to continue, novelists should take a lesson from M. Romaine. They cannot, by taking thought, turn themselves into poets and prophets, or swell to Shakespeare's stature. But they can, like M. Romaine, provide a stimulating and detailed commentary on modern life, on its modes of love and of business, its crime, its politics, its pleasures and its religion, which will be useful as well as pleasant to read. They should learn that descriptive reporting is not enough.

Mr. Hodson, by *Harvest in the North*, has shown that he knows about Lancashire and about repertory theatres. I should have been willing to take his word for it, but no doubt there are many thousands who prefer that he should demonstrate his knowledge in a long book. You would find it difficult to be fair to Mr. Hodson if, like me, you had read many other books almost exactly like his, about vulgar business men, struggling workers, weak but honest people who become involved in the disasters of the dishonest, a love of art flowering and withering among factories, slumps and booms and human nature. It is difficult in these circumstances even to read his book with care and attention. You fall asleep, you go and get something to smoke, you put it off till to-morrow, you look longingly at the end and pull yourself together, remembering your duty. Then finally, when you have read it, you are left with no clear impression save that it is a careful and solid piece of work of a kind which many people are supposed to like. I am not at all sure that they really do. These great tomes chosen by the Book Society seem to me to be like Mrs. Nautigale's dinner-parties in *Hell ! said the Duchess*, "at which it was taken for granted that a good time was being had by all, though no one knew exactly why."

That kind of joke is very frequent at the beginning of Mr. Arlen's little book. It seems at first as though he had written it in a sudden fit of high spirits in which he had been tempted to satirize his beloved Mayfair more vigorously than usual. But towards the end his playful puppyish attitude collapses, like his villain, and ends as a stink and something grey that slopped over on to the carpet. The solution of his mystery—a lecherous and hermaphroditic vampire—is too nasty to be funny and too fantastic to be terrible. If the last half of the book was intended to be satirical, it has missed fire. It is possible to make erotomaniacs ridiculous in exactly the same way in which dinner-parties and plutocrats can be made ridiculous. It is quite impossible to do so by giving them supernatural powers and describing in detail their amorous technique.

Ann and Aurelia is a romance about two school-friends, one of whom is beautiful, talented and ambitious but selfish and vain, the other dumpy, snub-nosed and taciturn but possessing a much nicer nature. They soon lose sight of each other. Ann, the beautiful and talented, goes on the stage. Aurelia, the dim and dumpy, marries a drunken journalist. Ann becomes more and more successful until she is Queen of London. Aurelia suffers tragedy after tragedy until she is childless, penniless and a widow. During these years the two friends make occasional unsuccessful contacts with each other : but finally when they are both alone in the world, they settle down together, Dame Ann Buttress, LL.D. (Hon.), a famous old scarecrow, enamelled, painted and bejewelled, and her companion, Aurelia Troubridge, a quiet little woman in black. It is the very best sort of romance for, though it is sentimental and exaggerated, it is not altogether removed from life. Mr. Alington writes with ease and charm ; and he can tell a story so that the reader wishes to know what happens next, which is almost all that matters in this sort of book.

Evening of a Martinet took Miss Oliver two years to write. Some people will not think it worth spending all that time on : but others, who like reading about a woman

who once had an illegitimate baby and spent the rest of her life living it down and being brave, will notice that Miss Oliver has told the story with unusual economy. This theme is bound to be sentimental. The mere fact of illegitimacy by itself is not tragic, and the process of living it down and being brave is not inevitable. Even the economic pressure which Miss Oliver stresses is not great enough to make tragedy. The martinet need never have been a martinet. But considerations of this kind will not worry Miss Oliver's readers, who should be numerous.

These ironical short stories of Miss Stern's are hack-work. Even at her worst, Miss Stern is never incompetent, but since she has allowed us in the past to know how well she can write, she must not blame us for being disappointed when she does not write quite so well. There is real Stern and mock Stern. *Pelican Walking* is mock.

Rumour of Heaven is what they call a "strange" book. Two of the characters are half-witted and all are neurotic. But Miss Lehmann writes about them with respect, almost with awe, as though each had a *nimbus* round him. I do not think the book can be said to have a point or a purpose. It is not an allegory, although it sometimes seems like one. But it has a theme—the desire to escape from civilization—and Miss Lehmann can stimulate thought on that dangerous subject.

WYNYARD BROWNE

FICTION—II

- TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND. By EDWARD SHANKS. Macmillan. 8s. 6d.
 THE BISHOP'S JAEGERs. By THORNE SMITH. Arthur Barker. 7s. 6d.
 INDIA'S CORAL STRAND. By RICHARD OKE. Faber and Faber. 7s. 6d.
 THE LOST HERO. By ROBERT SPEAIGHT. Peter Davies. 7s. 6d.
 DEW ON THE GRASS. By EILUNED LEWIS ; with a prefatory introduction from
 CHARLES MORGAN. Lovat Dickson. 7s. 6d.
 THE MAN IN THE STONE HOUSE. By ROSAMOND E. NESBIT BLANK. John
 Miles. 7s. 6d.
 IN THIS VALLEY. By MICHAEL HOME. Rich and Cowan. 7s. 6d.
 GOING ABROAD. By ROSE MACAULEY. Collins. 7s. 6d.
 A YOUNG MAN IN A HURRY, and OTHER STORIES. By T. O. BEACHCROFT.
 Boriswood. 7s. 6d.

THE world was Tom Flory's, his "Tom Tiddler's ground," from the time the bright lad attracted attention at school. To say this, to say his environment often jarred upon him, both early and late, to say that he was sensitive, is not to give a fair picture of the naturalness and rightness in the gradual revealing of his character in this book. Tom Flory is not a type, yet one knows many resembling him ; and for that reason what happens to him is important and interesting. From the tempo of the book at the start, it is evident that we are to follow him through many years. It is a book to be read slowly, thoughtfully, not because it is difficult to understand, for it is not, but because it is evocative of thought, reminding us of many things known and observed. The hurried reader, the reader seeking sensation, will miss its value.

Like threads in a tapestry, like structure in a well-knit play, the life of this character is built, illuminating his times, clarifying his background. More clever than his building of the character is the writer's destruction of him, the inevitable destruction by Tom Flory's own weakness. Never does this destruction seem wrong. At each step, the points leading up to it are clarified, a trail backward in the book is illuminated in the reader's mind. There is only a gentle insinuation that Tom was easily influenced; yet in the end the pattern is so clear, so unavoidable in its rightness.

The versatility of Mr. Shanks often surprises people, even those who know the variety of his work. He has been well known for his poetry, and perhaps will remain best known for that. The novels of any poet must be approached with misgivings. Sometimes they are good ; too often they are not. Among Mr. Shanks' novels, *Queer Street* was sincere, if a little cumbersome ; *The Enchanted Village* was a lovely trifle with its underlying seriousness not too well concealed—a fact which put many readers off. Then came the *Collected Poems*, somewhat as a surprise even to those who knew his work well. The *volume* of the poetry was surprising, and so was the regained delight in things read before (it is not always so !). It made one want more poetry from him, made one approach *Tom Tiddler's Ground*, however fortified by the knowledge that even poets must live, however cheered by the certainty of reading good prose, with a feeling of taking a substitute. Therefore, the book comes as a surprise, because it is a good novel. The German parts are especially vivid. In its thoughtful scope, the

book covers much of present life. In its fluid prose, there is food for any writer's study.

It is strange to read *The Bishop's Jaegers* immediately after Mr. Shanks' story of the man so gently, easily, influenced. *The Bishop's Jaegers* is a rollicking farce, and very broad. But I remember when Thorne Smith's first book, the grave and lovely, young *Dreams' End*, was his own favourite; when he wanted to turn his talent, which approached very near to genius, more in that direction. But men must live, and *Topper*, *The Stray Lamb*, and others paved the way, each one becoming more popular as it became more "what people want." *The Bishop's Jaegers* is not worse than most of them—and none of them were really bad, only too deliberately "naughty." Even so, in and around all the intentional shockingness, there was the real wit of one whose dreams of other books have now ended. Thorne Smith has died at the age of forty-two.

India's Coral Strand . . . is not that at all. It is an original, imaginative work, the story of a respectable body, an ordinary housewife, plunged suddenly into the midst of savage "copperskins," in some imaginary place. Mr. Oke makes this not too illogical, and does it in beautiful prose. It is very touching when the savages treat this huge, ordinary woman as a goddess, and she, at first quite naturally bewildered, finally takes it in a most sensible way. It is an original and delightful book.

The Lost Hero does not quite come off, in spite of an excellent beginning, with a young South American winning at Wimbledon, and meeting some of his own countrymen, who begin training him for a "hero" because of his godlike appearance. I believe the book fails because the author carries two themes in it—one the lost hero (for the young man, intelligent enough though he was, had not the slightest desire to be a hero or to stay in the limelight), the other the husband's motive for revenge in the triangle which (oh, naturally) ensued. The revenge part is extremely powerful, more so than the losing of the hero, more unusual, and far more real. If Mr. Speaight had started with a different title, or if he had put his emphasis more on the revenge, I wonder if the book would not have been better.

No fault can be found with the title of *Dew on the Grass*. It is perfect for this delicate recapturing of a happy childhood. How rare that is! We read so much of unhappy childhood—and have, as a matter of fact, too often reason to believe that those are not the happiest days for many people. In his introductory letter to Miss Lewis, Mr. Morgan says:

Thank you for having set a candle in my room and memory. I shall read your book often for its evocation of things lost and yet not utterly lost while imagination endures . . .

It is not altogether accurate to call this charming account of four children a novel, but so the publishers have described it.

The Man in the Stone House is another book about a little girl, and one very different from Miss Lewis'. In this, the child Monday has strange adventures, entangled with robbery, murder and sudden death. It is an achievement that she, in spite of this, in spite of being (at the age of thirteen) continually called "the child" or "the little girl," by the writer, in a way necessarily removing her farther from the reader, remains alive and real. The book is a strange mixture of sensationalism, sentiment and interesting reality. Monday, "the child," lingers in one's mind. I understand that this is a first novel. (So is *Dew on the Grass*.)

Mr. Michael Home's *In this Valley* is his second, and I hope that the third will do more to justify the promise of his first, *God and the Rabbit*. In this second one we have

again some, but not so much, of his love for the land. This is the rather trite story of a feud between a young farmer and the squire. The characters do not convince by the sincerity of the writing as they did in *God and the Rabbit*. In fact, I cannot see that he has said anything important in it which he had not already said, and only what Hardy and some others said much better a long while ago. Even so, there remains a conviction that Mr. Home can write. There is much to be said for writing of the things one knows, but sometimes it can be overdone. The other day I came across another piece of writing by the same author, when reading entirely for my own amusement. After about a thousand words, I thought, "Oh, well, there is no use going on with this—I know exactly what he is going to say." And so it proved.

Going Abroad is not Miss Rose Macauley's first novel nor her second, nor even her third. It is well enough in its light way, good enough to take on a ship and not read if you do not want to, and leave in your stateroom with a clear conscience if your luggage is crowded. On the other hand, it can be read without harm and with moderate enjoyment; and if you happen to be one of those who watch carefully the way people write, it may occur to you that Miss Macauley knew all this perfectly well and wrote this exactly as she intended to do.

As a short story writer, Mr. T. O. Beachcroft is a good craftsman. Constant readers of the MERCURY will remember his stories. Several of the ones in *A Young Man in a Hurry* have appeared in its pages.

HELEN MORAN

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THE BAMBOO BROOM. An Introduction to Japanese Haiku. By HAROLD GOULD HENDERSON. London : Kegan Paul. 4s. 6d.

AN orgy of books about books is not a cheering thing, however good they may be, and although there are numerous illustrious names on the covers of the books in front of me as I write, I am bound to confess after reading what the authors have written, that I feel as though I had spent an unwilling afternoon in an English provincial museum. These scandalous feelings are, of course, only engendered by the inordinately hot weather and my own consequent disinclination to tackle serious subjects at such a season, and yet, I feel that there have been brighter volumes in the same series than Professor Nichol Smith's *Essays and Studies* by members of The English Association. Mr. Gordon Bottomley's *Poetry and the Contemporary Theatre* is admirable, and I liked particularly his remark that the cinema supervened, "with a first effect of the complete diseducation of large audiences in the art of listening." Surely these masses of people have been re-educated since by the liberal offerings of the B.B.C. or do they only listen to the dance music, "incredible, inhuman noises," as are those, Mr. Bottomley says, that are to be found at the Talkies? Mr. Blunden quotes liberally from his own pleasant versions of *George Herbert's Latin Poems*, and Mr. C. S. Lewis provides a kind of intellectual dumb-bell in *The Personal Heresy in Criticism*.

The critical essays in *Determinations* have all been selected by Mr. Leavis from material which has appeared in *Scrutiny* during the past two years, and in order to suggest the spirit of *Scrutiny's* preoccupation with literary criticism he quotes from an editorial pronouncement of his own :

. . . we know that, in such a time of disintegration as the present, formulæ, credos, abstractions are extremely evasive of unambiguous and effective meaning, and that,

whatever else may be also necessary, no effort at integration can achieve anything real without a centre of real consensus—such a centre as is presupposed in the possibility of literary criticism and is tested in particular judgments. But ‘tested’ does not say enough; criticism, when it performs its function, not merely expresses and defines the ‘contemporary sensibility’; it helps to form it.

He goes on to state that a serious interest in literature cannot be merely literary, and that literary criticism is concerned with more than literature.

This is obvious, but it seems a pity that such admirable sentiments should be expressed in such turgid prose. The jargon of contemporary high-brow literary criticism is as pretentious and muddy as that of the psycho-analysts. There is, for instance, a paper on I. A. Richards which would convey little or nothing to the uninitiated, and there is a great deal of over-careful investigation that seems to me to be nothing more than so much hair-splitting. The sincerity in some of these essays is clear, the portentous gravity is irritating, and, at times, a writer’s assumption of superiority is very trying indeed. Possibly the heat is responsible for such a bilious appreciation of so much intellectual endeavour.

The members of the Department of English in the University of California have provided much easier reading on the conventional lines of academic criticism. Mr. George Reuben Potter writes authoritatively about *John Donne’s Discovery of Himself*, and there is an interesting note by Mr. Brightfield on the American associations and relationship of Leigh Hunt. Mr. Robert P. Utter is rather inclined to emphasize the obvious in his *Wise Enough to Play the Fool*, but he has some very sound things to say about Shakespeare’s mingling of tragedy and laughter. Another monument to American scholarship is Miss Snyder’s edition of Coleridge’s *Treatise on Method*, an essay which he contributed originally to the *Encyclopædia Metropolitana*. Coleridge was asked to superintend this publication, but it was only one of the many ventures he entered upon with immense enthusiasm, only to leave it as his interest abated. The editor’s introduction is a model of its kind.

Professor L. C. Martin delivered the twenty-fifth Warton Lecture, and his subject was *Thomas Warton and the Early Poems of Milton*. There is no doubt that the eighteenth century did much to enlarge the range of poetic taste, as Professor Martin points out, and Warton’s contribution to poetical appreciation was considerable. He was alive to the variety of the elements that meet in Milton’s poetry, but he lacked expository powers. Professor Martin’s final passage merits quotation. It is good sense well expressed :

To hold with Warton that in the kingdom of poetry there are many mansions deserving close acquaintance is not to claim that we shall wish to stay equally long in all of them, or that in that kingdom to understand all is to forgive all in a spirit of hearty, unthinking comprehensiveness. It is to imply that the particular instance should be known as thoroughly and in as many of its relationships as may be before standards are applied and judgments delivered. It is to recognize that Learning and Appreciation, like Voice and Verse, are harmonious sisters, whose ‘mixt power’ has a similar virtue :

Dead things with inbreath’d sense able to pierce.

Starting with the encouraging statement that the proper study of Shakespeare is only beginning, Professor Wilson Knight goes on to show that Tolstoy’s objection to Shakespeare’s lack of any religious essence in his work is quite without foundation. Tolstoy’s approach to Shakespeare was not promising. He found him to be without a sense of proportion and taste. His plays were compositions having absolutely nothing in common with art or poetry. They were works which were beneath criticism, insigni-

ficant, empty and immoral. On another occasion Tolstoy found that Shakespeare was an insignificant, inartistic, and not only non-moral but plainly immoral writer. Professor Knight points out the similarity in part of Tolstoy's strictures with those of Bridges, from whose essay, *The Influence of the Audience on Shakespeare's Drama*, he quotes. The fact is that Tolstoy was temperamentally unable to understand Shakespeare, and interesting though Professor Knight's essay is, there is an end of the matter.

Dr. Lyttelton presents what might be called a pleasant "Fowling piece" in *The Claim of Our Mother Tongue*, and he discourses very agreeably on strange usages of English. I like his story of the affectionate husband, who when first parted from his wife, very naturally wrote to her as "Dearest Maria." The lady had a grammarian's mind and wrote back furiously, charging her husband with infidelity, since the word "dearest" clearly implied that there were other Marias nearly as dear as herself. His reply is unfortunately not recorded.

The Year's Work in English Studies is as valuable as ever, and provides a necessary work of reference for the man or woman of letters. The thirteen sections deal with every aspect of English language and literature as they are presented in contemporary publications. The work is so conscientiously done that I was amazed to find an error in the description of a small and not very important book. It occurs on page 280, and no prize is offered for those who detect it.

Dr. Keiser's *The Indian in American Literature* is a disappointingly grave work. Its publication was, perhaps, a necessary piece of debunking, but the writer's style gives one to suppose that he would have been more happily employed in classifying moths. The book is no doubt comprehensive, but the treatment of the subject is completely humourless, and I found myself sighing for some allusion to or recognition of the amazing output of penny dreadfuls and other popular publications which made the American Indian into a legend, dear to the hearts of boys all over the world. As solemn page succeeded solemn page, I found myself conjuring up a reverend and professorial figure, equipped with an enormous net, resolutely and successfully stalking American Indians through his country's literature, and labelling each specimen very neatly when it had been caught.

An exotic growth is *The Bamboo Broom*, which concludes this remarkable collection of books and pamphlets. Mr. Henderson has attempted the impossible and been very successful about it too. He has tried to explain and translate various examples of the Japanese verse form, the Haiku, which is a very short poem, with a traditional and classic form, having special characteristics of its own. Here are two of the many specimens given :

A NAKED BEGGAR
So the beggar goes !
Heaven and Earth he's wearing
For his summer clothes !

THEY ALSO
The usually hateful crows !
They also, . . . on a morning
When it snows . . .

It would be interesting to learn the views of Spenser and Milton on this economical kind of poetry.

ERIC GILLETT

PLAYS

A COLLIER'S FRIDAY NIGHT. By D. H. LAWRENCE. Introduction by EDWARD GARNETT. Secker. 5s.

MARGARET GILLAN. By BRINSLEY MACNAMARA. Allen & Unwin. 3s. 6d.

BIOGRAPHY. By S. N. BEHRMAN. Secker. 5s.

TWO PLAYS FOR HISTORIANS. By ROY MELDRUM. Basil Blackwell. 7s. 6d.

SQUARING THE CIRCLE. By VALENTIN KATAEV. Translated by N. GOOLD-VERSCHOYLE. Wishart. 2s. 6d.

THE BLIND GODDESS. By ERNST TOLLER. Translated by EDWARD CRANKSHAW. The Bodley Head. 3s. 6d.

THIS, we learn, was Lawrence's first play, written in 1906 at the age of twenty-one. The conflict in the collier's family, with the father at odds with the mother and the mother jealous of her son's sweetheart, is based upon the author's own experience, as was only natural in a writer of his age. The play is not dramatic in the sense of having arresting "curtains" or tense situations, though there is such a situation in the third act. Much of it develops a squalid home with the inmates at enmity, but there is a grimness in the rather stark dialogue that, despite its want of cumulative interest, may make it better to see than to read. There is a tensivity in the telling, and a good cast would make the characters come to life. Its promise lies in an aptitude for the theatre, for while you read you feel that it was not written to be read but to be acted. Even in those parts of the dialogue which wander the inexperience of the dramatist, not want of dramatic faculty, is the fault. The characters are alive; the drama arises from their conflict; but the story, because the gaps between the chief situations are not linked, misses unity and a climax of interest. Yet the play remains a direct and promising piece of work.

Mr. Brinsley MacNamara, one of the younger playwrights of the Irish Theatre, has something of Ibsen's intensity in this tragedy of "a woman scorned." Margaret Gillan, who married one shopkeeper while in love with another, finds herself by her husband's will in the power of the other man. He wishes to be friendly, but ruins her hopes by marrying her daughter. In the extremity of her feelings she resolves to ruin them. The daughter, blind to the cause of her mother's conduct, sees her business undermined, and on the death of the daughter when her less excusably obtuse husband arrives at an explanation and declares himself still really faithful to his original feeling for Margaret, Margaret murders him. The theme is too far removed from common experience to escape the charge of perversity, but until the moment of the crime itself, a certain burning intensity gives it depth and tragic meaning. The will and the counter-plotting of the woman become a sort of nightmare because the dead man and Margaret herself appear to foresee with more than human cunning how the future will shape. If the idea at the root of the play had been more simple, the play might have been a fine one, but as it is, to make Margaret Gillan credible uses the art and skill that should have made universal the heroine of a simpler story. If Mr. MacNamara can only hit upon a normal character in a familiar situation, he has the gifts and the insight to write a play that shall be more than a remarkable feat. Fine acting

has doubtless carried this, in the theatre, into a class to which it is not strictly entitled to belong.

Mr. Behrman's play is a light American comedy about a woman-artist who has wandered across the world and always managed to fall upon her feet. She is a woman with many friends, who is amused by the human spectacle. We meet her on her return to New York, wondering what she shall do next. Then an enterprising young man appears and offers her, on behalf of his paper, a satisfactory cheque if she will write her autobiography. The idea tempts her to consider her past instead of continuing to live entirely in the moment. No sooner has she accepted, however, than her first lover, a man she has forgotten, enters and discovers that any romantic allusions to himself will prevent him from being elected a Senator. Various complications ensue. She destroys the MS. because she hates scenes and prefers to be amused. This sends the serious and pugnacious journalist packing, and she is whisked away by a telegram from another friend to paint portraits at Hollywood. The character of the heroine is the substance of the play, and, so far as an Englishman can judge, she is much better drawn than the various serious business people with whose gravity and ambitions she is contrasted. The other gay character, a composer, has also some charm, and with these two the author is most successful. The play gives opportunities to an actress, but is rather thin reading in its printed form.

Is the latent prejudice against historical plays and novels due to the fact that, if they are boring, they are more boring, because more pretentious, than plays of current life? I can find no better reason for my recoil from Mr. Meldrum's. Yet his first subject, Napoleon at St. Helena, though necessarily lacking incident, offers the domestic material for bitter comedy that Jane Austen knew how to use. The boredom, the squabbling, the solemnity and absurdity of Sir Hudson Lowe's nervous pre-occupation with his famous prisoner, might tempt a satirical imagination, but Mr. Meldrum has to introduce an Irish girl, self-smuggled into Longwood in a basket, and this invention, I take it, proves the Longwood subject to be beyond his powers. In his second play, about Alexander the Great, there is much talk, one stabbing, and no drama. I found it tedious, so that further discussion would be out of place.

Were we not told that the Moscow Art Theatre has continuously performed *Squaring the Circle* since 1927, Mr. Kataev's play might be taken for a gentle satire. In the shorter version sponsored by Mr. Ashley Dukes, there are only five characters: a friend, and two couples who first seem ashamed of being married at all, and then quickly decide that they have chosen the wrong partners. As the action takes place in a single room that all share, there is plenty of scope for mild farce in the arrangements and interactions of the couples. Whether the smiles the play gains outside Russia correspond with those it evokes in a Soviet theatre is uncertain. The Communist idiom, which discusses whether stealing is "unethical," whether it is "bourgeois" to undress behind a screen, amuses us, but Communists presumably take it seriously. The fun for them may be that a single room should not be considered enough for a couple of families, or that two couples who have got married in haste should talk about the tragedy of divorce from spouses who are perfectly ready to make a mutual exchange, an exchange that causes no more trouble to the registrar than correcting two entries in his book. The fun is almost infantile, and one wonders whether such simple farce is enough to please a Soviet audience, or whether Communist propaganda can really at last achieve such featherweight proportions as this. If so, the light touch—so long absent—is warmly to be welcomed.

Ernst Toller's play is called *The Blind Goddess* because the action turns on a miscarriage of justice, in which a doctor and his secretary, Anna, are wrongfully convicted

of murdering the doctor's wife. As in most such plays, the machinery of justice is not convincing, and has to be accepted by the reader for the sake of the story built upon it. The expert pathologist is reduced to absurdity by the subsequent production of a diary which makes him revoke his former opinion—that the victim died of chronic arsenical poisoning—and satisfies him that she died of a single dose ! The author's object seems to be a display of impatience at crowd-psychology, which will decide the fate of human beings according to passing moods and with no heed to evidence or facts. The best part of the play is its ending, in which Anna, after she and the doctor have been released from prison, discovers that imprisonment has altered her and that, now the longed-for hour of union with him has arrived, she cannot endure the prospect. Life with him, she says, would be " a new prison, a new chain." Prison has cured her, she explains, of personal, private ambitions ; and when she finds that the doctor is as much engrossed in them as ever, her feeling for him turns to revulsion, and she says good-bye. Anna, being the only person changed by her experience, thus becomes the foil to the crowd, the pathologist, and the rest who are entirely at the mercy of mood and propaganda. It is a pity that she should not have a larger share in the play, for positive values are always more interesting than destructive criticism of familiar follies.

OSBERT BURDETT

BIOGRAPHY AND MEMOIRS

EGYPT SINCE CROMER. By LORD LLOYD. Vol. II. Macmillan. 21s.

VICTORIA THE WIDOW AND HER SON. By HECTOR BOLITHO. Cobden-Sanderson. 21s.

QUEEN ALEXANDRA. By SIR GEORGE ARTHUR. Chapman & Hall. 8s. 6d.

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR HENRY DICKENS. Heinemann. 18s.

"RANJI." By ROLAND WILD. Rich & Cowan. 15s.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES. By VINCENT STARRETT. Nicholson & Watson. 8s. 6d.

EGYPTIAN politics are probably the most complicated in the world. Few foreign observers, though they may be resident in that country and directly concerned with its political affairs, would seriously pretend to understand them. It is certain that no Egyptian does. In these circumstances the average English newspaper reader can hardly be blamed if he has long ago given up the attempt to grasp the difference between the policies advocated by Mahmoud Pasha, by Mohamed Said, by Sidky or Sarwat, Ziwat or Zaghloul. In fact there is usually no difference. The political situation in Egypt is governed less by policies than by personalities. Political convictions hardly exist, except in the case of the extreme Nationalists, who have seldom the brains to attain to Ministerial rank. Sixty years ago, when the Khedive opened the first Egyptian parliament, he found, to his annoyance, that all the members had taken their seats on the Ministerial side. He was compelled to order some of them over to the Opposition benches. Under the mild influence of Great Britain the tendency, in later years, was the other way, until Zaghloul, the Nationalist, cracked the whip like any of the old Khedives. But what it was all about no foreigner tried to understand.

It is one of the great merits of Lord Lloyd's book (which he brings to completion with this second volume) that he sorts and disentangles this jumble of intrigues and irrelevancies into something recognizable as a political situation. Even he has to admit occasionally that he never understood by what backstairs manœuvres certain things were done. But he shows us a light, cold and clear, like his prose style, which has enabled at least one of his readers to get some grip, for the first time, upon the motives at the back of Egyptian political history during the last seven or eight years. They have been very important years: Zaghloul has come and gone, the whole scene has changed. A short time from now we may be all agreed that these few years covered by this second volume (during some of which Lord Lloyd himself was at the Residency) have been vital ones for modern Egypt. Here is a plain, frigid, unimpeachable record of them.

There are chapters, of course, of a more personal nature, dealing with Lord Lloyd's relations with the Home Government, and especially with his resignation when the Labour Party came into power. Our domestic politicians do not cut heroic figures in this part of the story. Sir Austen Chamberlain comes off fairly well, Mr. Baldwin less so, and Mr. Henderson very badly indeed. Lord Lloyd had a perfect right to state his case and quote his documents: indeed it would have been absurd to write a book like this without doing so. This journal has no concern with politics, and therefore it will

be enough to say that his language is studiously moderate, that he sets out the facts with his usual fullness and lucidity, and that—purely as a literary criticism—he seems to have all the better of the argument.

The value of the book is historical. From the literary point of view it may be regretted that Lord Lloyd has not permitted himself a few more personal and dramatic touches. For instance, readers of his very fair and careful account of Lord Allenby's stewardship may wish that he had thought it worth while to mention the glittering cavalry escort which accompanied the British Resident when he went to deliver his ultimatum after the murder of the Sirdar. But the omission of everything of that kind is obviously deliberate. The book is cold—in places bitter cold—but it is never indiscreet or exaggerated. Even those who most strongly disagree with the author's view of the situation will find it invaluable as a record and summary of the facts. Which was, no doubt, its primary object.

That being so, it is right to draw attention to one or two small defects. The index is not good. That very common Arabic name, Mohamed, is spelt sometimes "Mahomed," sometimes "Mohamed," with resulting confusion. And surely Morcos Bey Hanna, a Copt, can never have been a friend of Mustapha Kamel, the founder of the original Nationalist Party (as stated on page 177). Mustapha Kamel's policy towards the Copts was stated in his official newspaper, the *Lewa*, by his lieutenant, Sheikh Shawish. It was to flay them and cut their hides into whips to beat them with. The Copts were very loyal to the British connection in those days.

Mr. Hector Bolitho's new book is to be regarded as a companion volume to his *Albert the Good*, since he takes up the story of the domestic life of the Royal Family at the death of the Prince Consort and continues it to the end of Queen Victoria's reign. But his main concern, as his title indicates, is with the clash of personalities between the widowed Queen and her eldest son—a "tantalizing problem," as his publishers say on the paper wrapper, but a very familiar one, especially in our own time. For the modern son seems even less disposed than the son of a hundred years ago to occupy the groove prepared for him by his parents: even less likely to share their tastes and their friends. The difference is that, whereas public opinion in the nineteenth century supported parental authority, it is almost a binding convention nowadays to take the side of the son.

Mr. Bolitho, who handles a still rather delicate subject very tactfully and entertainingly, does his best to hold the balance even. In his anxiety to be impartial he wastes a good deal of space upon the ridiculous John Brown legend, and definitely over-emphasizes one or two uncomfortable incidents in the early life of the Prince of Wales. But he cannot conceal his instinctive preference, if not for the Prince personally, at any rate for his whole attitude of mind. The Prince of Wales was a modern man. We understand him. We sympathize with his irritation at being debarred from the handling of public affairs—for while our set examinations for the Diplomatic Service increase in difficulty, we all agree that book-learning has nothing to do with diplomatic skill—and in his case events proved us right. So that any picture of this famous "clash," by a modern author, is bound to show some slight, perhaps unconscious, bias. But Mr. Bolitho has done it extraordinarily well. Except for a smiling reference to "the leader of society" (which the Queen never attempted to be, in the sense here indicated) he carefully observes the Queensberry rules, and he has made a most instructive and exciting "clash" of it.

But if Queen Victoria made the 'eighties, her daughter-in-law, Queen Alexandra, saved them. Queen Alexandra's charm had nothing to do with dates or social customs; it would have been as potent, as irresistible, in A.D. 890 as it was in 1890. But it hap-

pened to be more needed in 1890 than at perhaps any other period of our history. From the social point of view it was what the doctor ordered. Just after the installation at Buckingham Palace of what Sir George Arthur rightly calls "that searching test, the electric light," a foreign diplomat, attending a State Ball, could write: "I have never seen such beauty in any capital in Europe, starting with the Princess of Wales and following up with Lady Dudley, Lady de Clifford and others." But it started, in more senses than one, with the Princess of Wales. She made beauty fashionable. For that alone she has her place in social history, and for that alone deserves the attention of serious biographers like Sir George Arthur. But he does not write too gravely here, and he has illustrated his little book with a number of delightful sketches and photographs, many—indeed, I think, most—of which have never been published before.

This autobiography of the late Sir Henry Dickens is rightly described as the "final witness" of those who knew and loved the author's father, Charles Dickens, in his lifetime. Anything his son can tell us about him, any childhood memory, however slight, becomes a national treasure. And here in this book, passed for the Press only a few weeks before the author's death, it is enshrined—the final word, the last we can hope to hear. It is as though a curtain had fallen. In the section of the book entitled *My Father as I Knew Him* we get no important new material; we tread familiar ground. But we do get amplification and the personal note—there is a story about Hans Andersen, for instance, which I do not remember to have read. We know Charles Dickens at the end of this book even better than before. But Sir Henry Dickens's own memories, which fill the greater part of the volume, are strong enough to stand on their own feet. He has been a shrewd observer of English life for the past half-century and more, and has known almost everyone of distinction at the Bar. It would be unfortunate if the book were to go out as no more than a son's last tribute to his famous sire.

Mr. Roland Wild has done all that was required of him in his authorized biography of "Ranji," one of the greatest Indians of our time. It is difficult to speak with moderation of a man who could use a cricket bat with so much artistry; for it is the firm conviction of every Englishman that a great cricketer must be an all-round great man. Mr. Wild does well, therefore, to insist that Ranji was a tactful and enlightened ruler and an administrator of real ability; and that if his heart was often on the cricket field he always knew how to keep his heart (and cricket) in its place.

Is it too soon to suggest that these enquiries into the private life of Sherlock Holmes are being just a little overdone? Perhaps the answer is that each one, as it appears, continues to be eagerly devoured by the public. And, in any case, there must be an end to it some day. In the meantime Mr. Vincent Starrett joins the hunt with a new "view halloa," a new attitude of mind. For he is an American, and, I should think, a young one; and he is not only interested in the alleged doings of Doyle's great detective, but also in the London of the early 'nineties, which he approaches with an antiquarian's enthusiasm, as though he were Mr. Howard Carter unveiling Tutan-khamen's tomb. But the picture is very fresh and vivid, and the investigations are pursued with admirable zest.

CLENNELL WILKINSON

FISHING

SEA FISHING. By A. E. COOPER and Many Others. The Lonsdale Library. Seeley, Service & Co. 15s.

AN ANGLER IN ARCADIA. By WILFRED W. MORRIS. The Moray Press. 7s. 6d.

FIFTY YEARS ON THE TEST. By C. ERNEST PAIN. Philip Allan. 10s. 6d.

IT is hard to read and write about fishing in the middle of London during a heat wave. The Thames at Blackfriars offers no encouragement to throw a fly now, and the sluggish, never-ebbing stream of Fleet Street traffic makes no music to console one for the steady, subdued roar of a salmon river, carried on and magnified by the pines. Lord's can give consolation to many, for, though I can find no points in common between playing cricket and catching fish, there is some similarity in watching it and a poor, though pleasant, day's fishing. In both, there is to be found that tranquillity, faintly ruffled by the expectation that something might happen, which one has in September fishing over a river full of tartan Salmon, who know more about the flies that are being offered to them than you do yourself, on the slight chance of getting into an early messenger of the autumn run. The three books that I have here may well, by their illustrations alone, give a nostalgia to any Londoner who has ever handled a rod, or even sat in an evil-smelling row-boat, catching very small fish with a very heavy line, under the superintendence of an Ancient with the disconcerting habit of eating such bait as the fish had discarded.

One can always be certain that any volume from the Lonsdale Library will be well worth reading, from the point of view either of entertainment or information, and *Sea Fishing* is remarkable for its store of both. Edited by Mr. A. E. Cooper, who has himself written several chapters, it is a compilation of every known method of taking legitimately every known sea fish all over the world, with contributions by the Marquess of Sligo, Eric Parker, P. N. R. Bartlett, Louis Babcock, A. F. Bell and several others. There seems to be no detail or fish omitted, from the lowly Herring, which incidentally has the dignity of being mentioned in the oath taken by the Deemster of the Isle of Man, and once had the even greater honour of being caught on a fly, to the Tarpon, held to be the greatest game fish in the sea. Boats, anchors, tackle, bait, etc., etc., are all dealt with separately and collectively, with accompanying diagrams. There are one hundred and twenty photographs, of which perhaps the finest are of Tunny, Marlin Swordfish, and Tarpon. Incidentally, Mr. Fred Taylor's chapter on Tunny is one of the most absorbing in the whole book. I suppose, technically speaking, that *Sea Fishing* is really a textbook, although it reads more like a comprehensive anthology. It is written with humour and understanding, and, although there are so many contributors involved in the compilation, any novice reading purely in the search for information, will not find himself mazed by a diversity of opinions, such as one would expect when so many experts are gathered together on such a controversial subject.

Mr. Wilfred Morris is a romanticist as well as a sportsman—the two have a way of going together. It would perhaps be as well to overlook the opening chapter of *An Angler in Arcadia*, with its rather affectedly archaic style, as it seems a pity that the reader should be prejudiced against such a pleasant and intelligent book. The author wanders dreamily beside the Trout and Salmon rivers of the border country, fishing for

the pure love of it and finding no bitterness in a blank day. He has found time to study the bird, flower and animal life of the river bank, which can offer much consolation for thunder or the many other obscure meteorological reasons why the fish will not take when you have travelled far and have few days to spare. He has also that rare and precious gift of extracting conversation from the local experts, and, what is more, of being able to reproduce those conversations in print, and leaving them untouched by that curious argot which is attributed, in sentimental literature, to the northern dialects.

In his foreword to *Fifty Years on the Test* Mr. Plunket Greene remarks :

As I read through the manuscript of *Fifty Years on the Test* it became clearer to me with every chapter that experience alone is but the lesser part of wisdom, a thing of ledgers and footrules and the taking of pains, and I thought to myself that if ever I wanted to know how to make a hatchery, or stock a river, or dress a fly, or learn the riverlore of bird and fish and mud and weed and food, or how to pitch hay, or handle bees, or train a Labrador, the sort of man for me would be one who had bagged bird for bird and fish for fish with "Poppy" Wyld, and hunted his own pack of hounds, and been nicknamed "the burr" (with ornaments) by Hampshire bowlers in general; one who had known and loved his river from its source (you can see the cup of water in the meadow at Ashe any day you like if you are tall enough) to its finish, and every buttercup and dragon-fly and sedgewarbler that grew or flew by or over it.

Mr. C. Ernest Pain's book is worthy of a foreword by the author of *Where the Bright Waters Meet*. He knows and loves the Test from its source to its tidal-water, and few biographers have recorded the lives of their particular heroes as faithfully and with so much understanding, or make so clear to the reader the full sense of what they wish to convey. Fifty years is a long innings, and the author has seen and recorded many changes during those years. Unlike the morose diehards who mutter pessimistically that sport is not what it was, he has found improvement in these changes. He remarks that the river was seldom fished after the Mayfly, and according to Durnford's *Diary* (1809 to 1819) Durnford paid off his man at the end of the Mayfly and so ended his season's fishing. Now, except for three months, it is fished all the year round, and the advent of the motor-car has brought anglers to its bank, who, in their turn, call yearly for various improvements; for instance, the cutting and control of weed. Perhaps it is the Test's reputation for being supreme among the trout-rivers of the world which is responsible for the high standard among its anglers, and for Mr. Pain's remark that nearly every angler he meets now can put a fly, lightly, wherever he wishes.

He introduces in the opening chapter the great angling names of the past. F. M. Halford, Dr. Wickham, Selwyn Marryat and Captain Wyld are among those about whom he has stories to tell. His chapter on casting, methods old and new, is both interesting and informative, and it contains some valuable hints for fishing under difficulties. Equally absorbing are those on fly-dressing and the finished article—which he has evidently studied from every angle with the aid of a glass finger-bowl—with some sound advice for finding out exactly what the Trout are feeding on when they are persistently ignoring any reasonable fly which is being offered to them.

Mr. Pain has contributed largely to the perfection which the Test has attained today. He has done much in the stocking of the river, and his chapters on "that vexed question," and the management of a hatchery, are written with a sane sense of proportion and a non-egotistical confidence in himself which establishes a corresponding confidence in the reader. He raises an interesting point on the question of making the Test into a salmon river, and the possible damage to Trout in the event of this coming to pass, producing some very convincing arguments against the proposal. It does

seem a pity that such a controversy should be raised at all, especially as the middle Test is probably the only water in the world where Salmon are regarded as vermin. There are always the rivers of Scotland and other parts of the kingdom wherein to catch salmon, and, as he remarks :

Let us not throw away a unique position as the most famous trout fishery in the world for the sake of a few salmon whose presence, if it does nothing else, will split the Test owners into factions from Whitchurch to the sea.

Mr. Pain's prose has a rare quality, and this volume should take its place among that small and precious class of angling books, at the head of which stands *Where the Bright Waters Meet*.

WILLIAM RICKMAN